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Studies in the Epistle of James

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Studies *in the* Epistle *of* James

First published as
PRACTICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS
OF CHRISTIANITY

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BROADMAN PRESS
Nashville, Tennessee

421–06232

Library of Congress catalog card number: 59–5861
Printed in the United States of America
5.AT58K.S.P.

Preface

In August, 1912, it was my privilege to deliver a course of lectures at the Northfield Bible Conference. There were many requests for the publication of the addresses. I shall never forget the bright faces of the hundreds who gathered in beautiful Sage Chapel at 8:30 on those August mornings. In August, 1913, the lectures were repeated at the New York Chautauqua and at the Winona Bible Conference. There were renewed appeals for publication, but it was not possible to put the material into shape because of my work on *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research.*

I have expanded the lectures a good deal and have added some introductory discussion about James himself. I have in mind ministers, social workers, students of the Bible, Sunday school teachers, and all lovers of the Word of God and of rightness of life. Technical matters are placed in parentheses or in footnotes so that the reader may go on without these if he cares to do so. There is a freshness in the Greek text not possible in the English, but those who do not know Greek may still read this book with entire ease.

I do not claim that these addresses are a detailed commentary on the Epistle of James. They are expository talks based, I trust, on sober, up-to-date scholarship and applied to modern life. It is the old gospel in the new age that we need and must know how to use. There is a wondrous charm in these words of the long ago from one who walked so

close by the side of the Son of man, who misunderstood him at first but who came at last to rejoice in his Brother in the flesh as the Lord Jesus Christ. It is immensely worthwhile to listen to what James has to say about Christianity and the problems of everyday life. His words throb with power today and strike a peculiarly modern note in the emphasis upon social problems and reality in religion. They have the breath of heaven and the warmth of human sympathy and love. Except for a few quotations from the King James Version, Scripture quotations follow the American Standard Version.

Preface to Second Edition

THE welcome accorded this interpretation of the Epistle of James makes a new edition necessary. Opportunity is thus afforded for weeding out misprints. Prof. S. L. Watson, of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, has kindly verified all the references in the book. The words of James strike a peculiarly modern note during these days of war.

A. T. R.

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I

James, a Servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Brother of the Lord

It will be well to put together the bits of information about James, or Jacob,[1] as he is called in the Greek. They are not very numerous, and yet it is possible to form a reasonably clear picture of his personality.

It is here assumed that James the author of the epistle is James the brother of the Lord (Gal. 1:19). It is hardly conceivable that James the brother of John could have written the epistle, since he was put to death as early as A.D. 44 by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2). The matters presented in the epistle were hardly acute in the Jewish Christian world by that date, and there is no evidence that this James had attained a special position of leadership that justified a general appeal to Jewish Christians.[2]

The epistle belongs to the five "disputed" epistles (James, Jude, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter) and it circulated in the East be-

[1] Our "James" comes through the Italian "Giacomo." The name is common enough in the first century A.D.

[2] For careful discussion of the authenticity of the epistle, see J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1910), pp. xlvii–lxvii; Alfred Plummer, "The General Epistles of St. James and St. Jude," *The Expositor's Bible,* ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: Hodder & Stroughton, 1891), pp. 13–24.

fore it did in the West. It occurs in the Peshitta Syriac Version. Origen (in Johan. xix. 6) knows it as "the Epistle current as that of James" and Eusebius (H. E. III. xxv. 3) describes it with the other four as "nevertheless well-known to most people."

There are many proofs [3] that the epistle was written by the author of the speech in Acts 15:13–21—delicate similarities of thought and style too subtle for mere imitation or copying. The same likeness appears between the Epistle of James and the letter to Antioch, probably written also by James (Acts 15:23–29). There are, besides, apparent reminiscences of the Sermon on the Mount, which James may have heard personally or at least heard the substance of it. There is the same vividness of imagery in the epistle that is so prominent a characteristic of the teaching of Jesus.

If it be urged that the author of the epistle, if related to Jesus, would have said so, one may reply that a delicate sense of propriety may have had precisely the opposite effect. Jesus had himself laid emphasis on the fact of his spiritual kinship with all believers as more important (Matt. 12:48–50). The fact that James during the ministry of Jesus was not sympathetic with His work would also act as a restraining force upon him. The brother of Jesus (see also Jude 1) naturally would wish to make his appeal on the same plane as the other teachers of the gospel. He rejoices in the title of "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," just as Paul did later (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1) and as Jude, the brother of James, did (Jude 1).

Paul, however, added the term "apostle" in Romans 1:1 and Titus 1:1 which James and Jude do not employ. None of them were members of the twelve, although Paul claimed apostleship on a par with the twelve (1 Cor. 9:1 f.; 15:8;

[3] See Mayor, *ibid.*, p. iv.

2 Cor. 12:11 f.). And yet Paul implies (Gal. 1:19) that James also is an apostle[4] in a true sense of that term. Like Paul, he had seen the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:7). But James, though one of the pillars at Jerusalem with Peter and John (Gal. 2:9), is content with the humbler word "slave." He is the bondsman of the Lord Jesus Christ as well as of God and so is a Christian in the full sense of the term.

He places Jesus on a par with God and uses Christ as a part of the name. He identifies his brother Jesus with the Messiah of the Old Testament and the fulfilment of the hopes and aspirations of true Judaism. One must perceive that the term "Christ" in the mouth of James carries its full content and is used deliberately. He adds also "Lord," which has here the Old Testament connotation of worship. It is not a mere polite term for station or courtesy. The use of "Lord" by the side of "God" places James unquestionably in the ranks of worshipers of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. See also James 2:1, "faith of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I consider it settled that James was not the cousin of Jesus, the son of the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. There is no doubt that the Greek word for brother is used for members of a brotherhood in the current Greek of the first century A.D., just as we find it so frequently in the New Testament. This usage does not apply to the brothers of Jesus referred to in the Gospels (John 2:12; Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55; John 7:3). In Matthew 12:46, 49 we find both the literal and the figurative use of "brother" side by side. In this looser sense anyone may be called "brother."

In Leviticus 10:4 the first cousins of Aaron are termed "brethren," but this instance does not justify the constant use of the word in the Gospels for a definite group of persons as brothers of Jesus if they were only cousins. Besides, they ap-

[4] Barnabas is also called an apostle in Acts 14:4, 14.

pear constantly with Mary, the mother of Jesus, as members of her family. The use of "sisters" increases the argument for the common use of the word (Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:56). There are many other difficulties in the way of this position, such as the fact of two sisters with the name of Mary and the identification of Alphaeus and Clopas.

The theory that James and the other brothers and sisters were all children of Joseph by a former marriage (step-brother theory) is free from the difficulty about the word "brother" and is not inconceivable in itself. Unfortunately there are critical objections to it, for Jesus is not called "only begotten" of Mary but "firstborn" in Luke 2:7: "She brought forth her firstborn son."

Jesus is "only begotten" of God (John 1:18), as the widow of Nain had an only son (Luke 7:12) and Jairus an only daughter (Luke 8:42). But "firstborn" occurs in the true sense all through the Septuagint (cf. Gen. 27:19, 32; 43:33; Deut. 21:15), where there were other children. The inscriptions show it in the true sense. The New Testament instances of "firstborn" are all strictly correct from this standpoint, even Colossians 1:15 and Romans 8:29. "Firstborn" implies other children. Besides, the natural meaning of Matthew 1:25 leads to the same conclusion.

The theory (brother or half-brother theory) that Jesus and James were sons of the same mother, Mary, may be said to hold the field against the others. In fact, it is most likely that both of the other theories grew out of the desire to secure a greater imaginary sanctity for Mary under the impression that she was more holy if she bore only Jesus and did not live as wife with Joseph. But this is contrary to all Jewish sentiment, and certainly there is nothing in the Gospels to countenance this notion but much to contradict it. We conclude, therefore, that James, the author of the epistle, is the brother of Jesus.

In the Family Circle at Nazareth

In spite of Origen's opinion (Origen on Matt. 13:55) that the sons and daughters of Joseph were children of a former marriage, an opinion more than offset by the position of Tertullian (*de Monog.* 8, *de Virg. Vel.* 6), we must think of the family circle at Nazareth as composed of five brothers (Jesus, James, Joses, Judas, Simon, as in Mark 6:3, but Jesus, James, Joseph, Simon, Judas in Matt. 13:55) and the "sisters." Every implication is that they all passed as sons and daughters of Joseph and Mary in the usual sense. The order implies also that while Jesus was the eldest, James came next among the brothers. Unfortunately, the names of the sisters are not given.

We are to think, therefore, of a large home circle in the humble carpenter's house in Nazareth. Jesus, the eldest, followed the trade of Joseph, the father of the family, and came to be known as "the carpenter" (Mark 6:3). Certainly all the children must have learned to work with their hands, although we do not know whether James adopted that trade or some other. He would soon be called upon to help in the support of the family, as Joseph seems to be dead when Jesus enters upon his ministry; he is not mentioned with Mary and the children in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3. Joseph was probably older than Mary. The family were not peasants, and they probably had all the necessary comforts of the simple primitive life of a workman in a small town in Galilee.

Jewish boys usually started to school when six years old, but before that the education of James had begun in the home. "James, together with his brothers and sisters, was brought up in an atmosphere charged with reverence for God and love for man, with tenderness, freedom, and joy." [5] The

[5] William Patrick, *James, the Lord's Brother* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 23.

Jewish parents did not shirk parental responsibility for the religious training of the children, and a large family was regarded as a blessing from God. The love of God was the first of all lessons taught at home, and this was followed by the simple elements of truth, uprightness, mercy, and beneficence.[6] The Jewish mother rejoiced in her children, and James was fortunate in having such a mother as Mary and such a father as Joseph, whose dedication to the things of their God was sincere.

At school, while religion was the main theme and portions of the Old Testament the textbook, there was abundant intellectual stimulus. The quick-witted boy would be all alive to the great problems of faith and duty. The teacher would probably use the Aramaic dialect of Galilee, even if he had the Old Testament in Hebrew. But the boy would soon learn to speak the *Koine* also, the current Greek of the world, the language of commerce and of common intercourse everywhere. Simon Peter, the fisherman, knew and used Greek, as did John, the apostle. It was common for people to know two languages. Paul probably knew Aramaic and Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Jesus knew and spoke both Aramaic and Greek and probably knew Hebrew also.

James came to write Greek with a great deal of ease and skill. He was in no sense a littérateur. He was no Atticist in his style and did not try to imitate the classical Greek writers, whom he probably never read. Deissmann[7] does call the Epistle of James "a little piece of literature," but he means a product of popular literature. Certainly there is nothing artificial in content and style. Is it mere fancy to think that the same poetic beauty shown in Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) appears in the Sermon on the Mount and in the

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[7] G. A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, trans. L. R. M. Strachan (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1913), p. 242.

Epistle of James? At least the rich acquaintance with the Old Testament exists in all three.

The author of the epistle is gifted with imagination and shows knowledge of the apocryphal books, especially the wisdom literature of the Jews. But he is a thorough Jew in his outlook and literary method,[8] so much so indeed that it is contended by some that James wrote the epistle originally in Aramaic,[9] an unlikely supposition. The widespread diffusion of Greek in Palestine amply accounts for the author's grasp of the language.[10] The epigrammatic and picturesque style is due to the writer's individuality, his environment, and his reading. His vocabulary is rich in words about fishing, husbandry, and domestic life, as one would expect.[11] A man of the force and position of James could easily broaden his acquaintance with the Greek tongue as the years went by. The Greek is pure *Koine,* with few Hebraisms, though the tone is distinctly that of the Old Testament.[12] He speaks like a prophet of old in the service of Christ. There is no doubt that James came to be a man of culture in a real sense.

He probably married early, as it was the custom of the Jews for men to marry at the age of eighteen.[13] Paul expressly states that the brothers of the Lord were married (1 Cor. 9:5). We do not know, of course, the age of James when Jesus began his ministry. In all probability he had already married and had a home of his own in Nazareth. The sisters probably married and settled in Nazareth also (Mark 6:3).

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[8] George Milligan, *New Testament Documents, Their Origin and Early History* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1910), p. 111.

[9] Mayor, *op. cit.,* pp. ccv–ccxiii.

[10] Milligan, *loc. cit.*

[11] Mayor, *op. cit.,* p. cxcii.

[12] A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1915), p. 123.

[13] Charles Taylor, *Saying of the Jewish Fathers* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), Appendix 97.

We have no mention of the rest of the children going to Jerusalem when the boy Jesus was taken (Luke 2:41–52). Indeed, it is rather implied that they were not in the company, but this does not mean that James did not have his turn to go at the age of twelve and afterward.

There is no reason to believe that James grew up to be a Nazarite, as Hegesippus quoted by Eusebius (H. E. ii. 23) alleges: "He is distinguished from others of the same name by the title 'Just,' which has been applied to him from the first. He was holy from his mother's womb, drank no wine or strong drink, nor ate animal food; no razor came on his head, nor did he anoint himself with oil nor use the bath. To him only was it permitted to enter the Holy of Holies." The evident legendary details here deprive the statement of real value except as witness to his genuine piety and to the esteem in which he was held by the people generally. Hegesippus adds: "His knees became hard like a camel's, because he was always kneeling in the temple, asking forgiveness for the people," a description of his life in Jerusalem after he became a Christian. At any rate, like Joseph his father, he grew up to be a just man and came to be known as James the Just.

A Scoffer of Jesus

We are left to conjecture what the brothers and sisters of Jesus thought when he went down to the Jordan to meet the Baptist. We know that "Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Mary had seen the dawning messianic consciousness when Jesus was only twelve (Luke 2:49). The reply of Jesus to his mother's hint about the wine at the wedding of Cana implies that they had talked over his messianic task (John 2:4). But the brothers accompanied Jesus, his mother, and the small band of six disciples to Capernaum after the miracle at Cana, and the group remained together for some days (John 2:12). They

may have met at Nazareth after the wedding at Cana and thence proceeded to Capernaum.

It is possible that the brothers, not being at Cana and not knowing the secret between Jesus and Mary, may not have grasped the significance of the events connected with the baptism of Jesus and his entrance upon his messianic career. The presence of the band of "disciples" (learners at the feet of the new Rabbi) argues that the brothers must have known something about the wonderful claims of Jesus, their brother. At any rate, it is pleasant to see them all here together in Capernaum in fellowship and friendliness, "a proof of the closeness of the ties uniting our Lord and them. No shadow of estrangement had as yet fallen upon their relations."[14] Godet thinks that Mary and the brothers came on to Capernaum, eager for more miracles like the one at Cana, and may have been keenly disappointed because Jesus wrought none. This is possible but hardly as probable as the idea that it was a friendly group in frank fellowship in Capernaum.

We are left in the dark as to the real attitude of the brothers of Jesus when he began his great work. They may have looked upon him as a sort of irregular rabbi or a mild enthusiast carried away by the new teaching of John the Baptist. There would be natural pride in his work while it succeeded, without necessary belief in his claims. Certainly Mary must have had at first the utmost faith, tremulous with expectation, in the messiahship of Jesus. Perhaps the brothers were at first only mildly interested or even skeptical of the qualifications of one out of their own family circle. The brothers may not have been free from the jealousy sometimes seen in home life.

It was not long before hostility toward Jesus sprang up in Nazareth itself, according to the vivid narrative in Luke

[14] Patrick, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

4:16–31; it probably was soon after the return of Jesus from Judea and Samaria to Galilee, certainly after the miracle at Capernaum (Luke 4:23), as told in John 4:46–54. James may have shared with the rest the first wonder at the words of grace (Luke 4:22) and the quick flash of wrath as the pride of the town was pricked (Luke 4:28). Henceforth in Nazareth, despite his growing fame elsewhere, Jesus was *persona non grata.* His brothers felt this atmosphere of hostility very keenly.

The curtain falls on the family life in Nazareth till toward the close of the Galilean ministry, after the second general tour of Galilee by Jesus (Luke 8:1–3). The tremendous work of Jesus had created a wonderful impression. The multitudes in amazement asked if Jesus were not the son of David, the Messiah (Matt. 12:23). The Pharisees in anger and chagrin replied that he was in league with Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24). The excitement was intense. Jesus could not eat (Mark 3:20). News of all this came to "his friends" (Mark 3:21), who are explained in Mark 3:31 as "his mother and his brothers."

Probably already vague rumors were afloat that Jesus was out of his head. Once people said of Jesus that he was "a gluttonous man, and a winebibber" (Luke 7:34), but now he is so queer! In the inner circle at Nazareth Mary had watched and heard it all. What could it mean? Perhaps, Mary argued, his reason has been temporarily dethroned by the strain and the excitement. She will go and bring him home where he can have quiet and rest. It was easier for the brothers to see it so, since they had not accepted him as Messiah. Perhaps one may have said, "I told you so." At any rate, "they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself" (Mark 3:21).

Jesus is in a crowded house in Galilee near the lake when they come (Mark 3:19) and readily understands why they

have come when he is told that his mother and brothers are standing without and wish to speak with him (Mark 3:31; Matt. 12:46; Luke 8:19 f.). It is a tragedy of life, pathetic beyond words. The ecclesiastics have long ago made issue with him and are now violently assailing him. Many of the people are following the lead of the Pharisees. And now his own mother and brothers have come and wish to take him home so as to avoid the scandal and shame of his further public ministry. The Pharisees say he has a demon and is in league with the devil. The "charitable" construction, therefore, is that he is a lunatic. But Jesus does not go out to meet his own mother and brothers (James among them). He had come to know one of the bitterest of human sorrows, a pang to the very heart—to be misunderstood "among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mark 6:4).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Jesus found consolation in the fact that many did understand him. "And looking round on them that sat round about him" (Mark 3:34) when the message came, "he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:49 f.). Mother and brothers and even his "sisters" (note "and sister") had failed in the crisis to comprehend Jesus. But the Father in heaven had not veiled his face from Jesus. It is not clear that James heard this pathetic rebuke from Jesus, as he may have remained standing outside the house. Many have come into spiritual fellowship with Jesus who thus have the peculiar privilege of taking the place made empty in his heart for the time by mother and sister and brother. With Mary it was a temporary eclipse, and she was loyal at the end as she stood by the cross (John 19:25).

Jesus made another and a last visit to Nazareth (Matt. 13:54–58; Mark 6:1–6). There was a revival of interest in him

which crystallized into hard skepticism, so that Jesus "did not many mighty works there," and even "marvelled because of their unbelief." He was a "prophet without honor" in Nazareth as he left for the last time the city of his childhood and early manhood.

The tide at last turned against Jesus in Capernaum (John 6:22–71) and in Galilee generally. For six months he remained away, save for a brief visit that met with the united hostility of Pharisee and Sadducee (Matt. 15:39 to 16:4; Mark 8:10–13). The brothers of Jesus meanwhile seemed to grow in this spirit of dislike toward the elder brother. Six months before the death of Jesus they ridiculed him for his being a virtual refugee from Galilee and for his secretive methods, quite inconsistent with his claims of messiahship (John 7:2–5). James as the oldest of the brothers was probably the spokesman on this occasion. The "advice" was of an extremely irritating nature, with the implication that Jesus was seeking to gain credit "in public" while doing his work "in secret." It is not surprising, therefore, that Jesus did precisely the opposite, for he went up to Jerusalem, "not publicly, but as it were in secret" (John 7:10).

John explains the motive of the brothers (7:4 f.), "for even his brethren did not believe on him." [15] They had reached the point when they were willing to attack Jesus. They belonged to the world and did not understand Jesus (John 7:6 f.). It is not necessary to say that James was actually a Pharisee, still less an Essene. The use made of his name by the Judaizers in the controversy with Paul does not prove this to be true (Gal. 2:12). But certainly he was now in general sympathy with the hostile attitude of the ecclesiastics from Jerusalem (both Pharisee and Sadducee). The cup that Jesus must drink at Jerusalem has this added bitterness in it.

[15] The tense expresses a long-standing attitude.

It is not particularly surprising, when all things are considered, that at his death Jesus commended his mother to John, the beloved disciple, rather than to any of his brothers or sisters. They were all completely out of sympathy with him and with her. At such an hour sympathy counted far more than blood relationship alone. Besides, the brothers may not have been in Jerusalem at this time, for they still lived in Nazareth. It is possible, of course, that James may have been at the Passover, which was so generally attended by the Jews. Certainly he was at Pentecost later (Acts 1:14).

We do not know whether Jesus appeared to James in Jerusalem or in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:7), though Paul mentions it after the appearance to the more than five hundred, which was in Galilee. Mary needed immediate attention, and Jesus died upon the cross with James and all his brothers and sisters utterly out of touch with him. "Doubtless their very intimacy with our Lord blinded them to his real greatness." [16]

Seeing the Risen Christ

It is Paul who tells us of this most interesting event (1 Cor. 15:7).[17] As already stated, we do not know where James was when the risen Jesus manifested himself to him. Broadus [18] locates the event in Jerusalem after the return from Galilee and before the ascension. As a matter of fact, it could have been in Galilee perfectly well. James may have come to Jerusalem (Acts 1:14) because he had been converted in Galilee. At any rate, "this appearance to James is the only one not made to a known believer." [19] But Dale [20] holds that James

[16] Patrick, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

[17] The same verb occurs here as in the other appearances of Jesus.

[18] J. A. Broadus (comp.), *Harmony of the Gospels* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1893), p. 229.

[19] Patrick, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

[20] R. W. Dale, *The Epistle of James and Other Discourses* (New York: Hodder & Stroughton, 1895), p. 5.

had already been converted before his Brother appeared to him as a result of information from his mother or from the apostles. This is, of course, possible, but it cannot be insisted on as necessary on the ground that Jesus appeared to believers only. The case of Saul refutes that position.

It is quite possible that James may have heard of the report of the resurrection of Jesus and had thus some preparation for the great event when he saw Jesus risen from the dead. We are told nothing of what passed between the two brothers, but one may be sure that no harsh reproof came from Jesus for the indifference and even scoffing of James. The brothers of Jesus were children of their age, which was a pharisaic age in Palestine. The current expectation was for a political Messiah, not a Saviour dying for the sins of the world.

Even the twelve apostles had not risen to the conception of a spiritual Messiah, and they had given up all hope upon the death of Jesus and had to be convinced themselves of the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, a task of much difficulty, particularly in the case of Thomas, though they all at first scoffed at the stories of Mary Magdalene and the other women. So, then, the path of James toward faith was not an easy one, but he took it and came out boldly on the side of the disciples of Christ. It is more than likely that it was through James that the other three brothers were led to faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour (Acts 1:14).

The Gospel of the Hebrews as quoted by Jerome (*de Viris Illustribus* 2) gives a story to the effect that James was already a disciple and present at the last Passover with Jesus and took a vow "that he would not eat bread from that hour on which he had drunk the cup of the Lord till he saw him risen from the dead. Again, a little afterward, the Lord says, Bring a table and bread. Immediately it is added: He took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave it to James the

Just, and said to him, My brother, eat the bread; for the Son of Man has risen from the dead." Mayor [21] is inclined to credit this story in part, but surely it utterly misunderstands Luke 22:18, makes James one of the twelve, and is impossible from any point of view, since not even the twelve expected Jesus to rise from the dead.

There are difficulties enough connected with the proof of the resurrection of Jesus without burdening the narrative with this story. But, let me add, modern science has not made faith in the resurrection of Jesus impossible, nor has modern research disposed of the value of the Gospel accounts of this tremendous event. Paul, who testifies to this experience of James, is himself the chief witness to the reality of the fact. This is not the place to enter upon a discussion of this great question, but modern men may and do still believe in the risen Christ with all simplicity and sincerity.[22]

In the Upper Room at Pentecost

The simple statement in Acts 1:14 is: "These all . . . continued stedfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." So then all four are now disciples and are admitted to the inmost secrets of the circle of believers in Jerusalem, whither they have now come. Certainly, now that they have all come to believe in their Brother as in reality the Messiah of Israel risen from the dead, they must come to Jerusalem to be with their mother in her hour of triumph and joy. No one but a mother can understand the fulness of satisfaction in Mary's heart now. The sword had pierced her own soul (Luke 2:35), as old Simeon had prophesied when he saw the Babe in the Temple, but now the wound has been healed and there is a new and richer

[21] *Op. cit.*, p. xxxvii.

[22] James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1908); Thorburn, *The Resurrection Narratives and Modern Criticism.*

Magnificat in her heart. It was worth all that she had endured to wait with the disciples and her other sons in the upper room for the Promise of the Father. The breach in her family life had been healed.

It is clear that the heartiest of welcomes greeted the brothers of Jesus. They were men of importance in themselves, James in particular, who from every standpoint is one of the first men of his day. It is possible that the coolness of James and the other brothers had injured the work of Jesus with a good many, who used this fact against the claims of Jesus. Now the accession of these brothers was of the utmost value to the band of believers gathered in the upper room, where Jesus had manifested himself before his ascension.

The presence of the brothers is mentioned by Luke before the choice of Matthias to succeed Judas. One may naturally wonder why James was not suggested by Peter, since he undoubtedly was equal to the eleven in ability and all other qualities save one. But this one defect was fatal. He had not been with the twelve during the ministry of Jesus and so could not be a firsthand witness to his words and teachings (Acts 1:22). Otherwise, we may infer that James would have been a welcome addition to the twelve in the place of Judas.[23]

But the significant fact is that James is present during the wonderful days of this Pentecost and is filled, like the rest, with the Holy Spirit. He enters upon the new task of world evangelization with the new insight and the new influx of divine power. He faces the new day with the light of the sun in his face.

Leadership in the Jerusalem Church

If he was disqualified from being one of the twelve, he was not debarred from liberty to serve. In fact, he was a practical

[23] Patrick, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

apostle in Jerusalem along with the rest. The twelve kept no secrets from James. He gradually won his way to the love and confidence of all the great church in Jerusalem. His importance in Jerusalem is recognized by Paul on the occasion of his visit to Jerusalem on his return from Damascus, for he says: "Other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). Here Paul treats him as an apostle and practically calls him so.

James had probably seen Paul before, when he was the leader of the persecution against the Christians. He doubtless was glad to see this powerful addition to the forces of Christianity, but James is probably included in Luke's statement of the reception of Paul on this occasion. "And they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). Barnabas alone had faith in Paul and the courage to stand by him. If James was suspicious of the new convert, so were all the rest, and not without reason. It is clear from Paul's reference in Galatians 1:18 that Peter responded heartily to Paul's advances after once opening his heart to him. They had a delightful fifteen days together. It is not likely, as Farrar [24] argues, that James, being a legalist, held aloof from Paul throughout. This is wholly gratuitous.

James is not mentioned again in Acts till 12:17, and in a most significant manner. James, the brother of John, has been killed by Herod Agrippa I. Peter has been thrown into prison but has been released by the angel of the Lord in response to the prayers of the church assembled in the home of Mary, mother of John Mark (12:12). Peter goes to the house and tells the astonished group: "Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren." This is somewhere about A.D. 44. James now clearly occupies a position of leadership in the church. Peter himself apparently leaves the city for the time being (12:17).

[24] *St. Paul*, i., p. 233.

There are already "elders" (11:30) in the church at Jerusalem. We do not know what the position of James is, but certainly it is one of great honor and leadership. The apostles, since James could not be one of the twelve who were charged with the general work of evangelization, may have been glad for James to be in charge at Jerusalem. Certainly he proved himself fully equal to the task.

James maintains the position of leadership in Jerusalem throughout the narrative in Acts. He is evidently the president of the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:14–21). He is in charge of the church when Paul visits Jerusalem the last time (Acts 21:18): "Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present." He possessed the confidence of this great Jewish church, the mother church at Jerusalem, and had the ear of the non-Christian Jewish world in a way hardly true of any other disciple of Jesus. Jews would listen to James who would not heed Simon Peter.

The Writing of the Epistle

The Epistle of James probably was written shortly before the Jerusalem Conference, most likely just before, that is, about A.D. 48 or 49. There is no room here for an extended discussion of the proof of this statement. In general I agree with the arguments of Mayor on this point.[25] Plummer [26] is unable to decide between A.D. 49 and 59. Writers like von Soden place it at the end of the century, and Bruckner puts it in the second century. Spitta admits that Paul in Romans alludes to the Epistle of James, but suggests that the present epistle is a Christian adaptation of a Jewish book.

On the whole, the weight of the argument is toward the

[25] See his commentary on James and his article on the epistle in James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), II, 540–48.

[26] Plummer, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 f.; Patrick, *op. cit.*, chap. V.

conclusion that James wrote the epistle before the Conference and without reference to the Judaizing controversy. Paul in Galatians and Romans may very well have in mind a misuse of what James in chapter 2 says about faith and works, which misapprehension he seeks to correct. The epistle must be placed either between A.D. 40 and 50, before the Judaizing controversy arose, or in the middle of the second century, after it had died down.[27] The early date has the best of it, in my opinion.

If this date for the writing of the epistle is correct, we have no difficulty in seeing how James could have written it so early. Already about A.D. 44 we saw his leadership in the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17). No man in the apostolic circles at this period had the ear of the Jewish Christians as did James. This is seen further in the fact that he is asked to preside over the Conference in Jerusalem to settle the issues raised by the Judaizers against the work of Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles. The epistle, therefore, seems to come in at this state of the career of James and is the chief expression left of his mind and life.

Champion of Paul at the Conference

I cannot enter upon a formal discussion of the many questions in dispute concerning this great event in the apostolic period. I can only briefly sketch my own interpretation of the part played by James on this occasion.[28] In brief, it is here maintained that in Galatians 2:1–10 Paul gives a report of the private interview with the leaders in Jerusalem after the first

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[27] Cf. Maurice Jones, *The New Testament in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1914), p. 321.

[28] For a fuller presentation of the matter from the standpoint of Paul, see my *Epochs in the Life of Paul* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), chapter VII. I identify the visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2:1–10 and Acts 15, in spite of the arguments of Sir W. M. Ramsay to the contrary.

public meeting (Acts 15:3 f.; Gal. 2:2) was adjourned because of the violent opposition of the Judaizers (Acts 15:5). In this private conference Paul, though anxious to win the public support of James and Cephas and John, "the reputed pillars" (Gal. 2:9), yet was not willing to compromise the great issue at stake, "our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus" (2:4) and "the truth of the gospel" (2:5).

Paul reveals a certain amount of embarrassment in his references to the three great leaders in Jerusalem, as is manifest in the long and broken sentence in verses 6–10. He roundly asserts his independence of them and affirms that they imparted nothing to him (2:6). It seems clear that some of the more timid brethren were quite disposed to surrender to the Judaizers for the sake of peace and in particular to agree that Titus, a full-fledged Greek convert in Paul's company, should be circumcised. But Paul gave "the pillars" to understand that he would not have peace on those terms. It is quite possible that James, here mentioned before Cephas (Peter) and John as the real leader of the group,[29] had not till now clearly understood Paul's true position.

The Judaizers had in all probability counted on James to take their side against Paul, "but contrariwise, when they saw [30] that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision . . . they . . . gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision" (2:7–9). It is much easier to think of James as the author of chapter 2 in his epistle before this event than after this pact with Paul. Note also in verse 9, "and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me . . ." Now the coast is clear, and Paul is sure of victory in the

[29] Cf. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1913).

[30] A hint that they had not always seen it this way.

open Conference. The stipulation about the poor (2:10) was in harmony with Paul's previous practice (Acts 11:29 f.).

In the second meeting of the general Conference James evidently presides and sums up the situation in favor of Paul, after Peter (Acts 15:7–12) has shown how they had already agreed to Gentile liberty in the case of Cornelius and his household. James, with due deliberation (15:13), concludes (15:12–21) with a pointed endorsement of Simon Peter's speech and acceptance of the work at Caesarea and among the Gentiles generally as a visitation of God. He clinches the whole matter by showing that the prophets (as Amos 9:11 f.) agree with this position that the Gentiles are to be saved. "Wherefore my judgment is," he says as the president of the Conference, practically offering a resolution for the vote of the Conference, "that we trouble not them that from among the Gentiles turn to God" (Acts 15:19). He has put the matter in a very happy form. Surely Jewish Christians could but rejoice to see Gentiles "turn to God."

James proposes the writing of an epistle to the Gentile Christians to this effect, with the added warning "that they abstain from the pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood." It is at least open to question whether "what is strangled" is genuine here, since it is wanting in D (Codex Bezae), Irenæus, Tertullian, and Cyprian, as also in 15:28. If so, the prohibition is against idolatry (idol feasts), murder (blood), and immorality (fornication), the great vices of heathenism. But with the text as it stands, "things strangled," we seem to have a concession to the Jewish ceremonial law and to Jewish prejudices on that point. James is not uneasy about Moses, for he is read in the synagogues every sabbath (Acts 15:21), a reference to the habit of the Christians still to worship in the Jewish synagogues (cf. James 2:2).

The "wisdom" of James is manifest in this masterly ad-

dress, which held conviction to such an extent that the resolution of James was carried unanimously by the body of "the apostles and the elders, with the whole church" (Acts 15:22), a remarkable outcome when the bitterness of the Judaizers is considered and a distinct tribute to the influence of James. We may assume that the Judaizers were silent, since they saw that they were hopelessly defeated.

The epistle which was sent to the church at Antioch (15:23–29) embodies the ideas of James and was probably written by him, since the style is like that of his speech and the epistle that bears his name. The letter expressly disclaims responsibility for the conduct of the Judaizers at Antioch (15:24), pointedly condemns their behavior, commends "our beloved Barnabas and Paul" (vv. 25 f.), refers to the messengers Judas and Silas, claims the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the stand for Gentile freedom (v. 28), and repeats the stipulations in the speech of James about the special Gentile sins (v. 29).

There can be no question that James here entered fully into sympathy with the contention of Paul that the yoke of Jewish ceremonialism should not be imposed upon the Gentile Christians. James is a champion of the Pauline doctrine of grace as opposed to works. It is interesting to note the phrase "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). It is difficult to see how, after this Conference, James and Paul could misunderstand or oppose each other. As we shall see, the real explanation of the apparent conflict between James 2 and Romans 3 is quite other than this unnecessary hypothesis. James has now given the great weight of his character and influence among the Jewish Christians to the endorsement of the work of Paul among the Gentiles. James is a Jewish Christian but not a Judaizer. He does not wish to impose the burden of the Mosaic ritual upon the Gentiles, though he still observes it himself, as do the other Jewish Christians, including Paul.

Misuse of the Name of James

In Galatians 2:11 Paul speaks of a visit of Peter to Antioch, apparently some time after the events recorded in 2:1–10. If it were before the Conference, Peter's conduct at Antioch would be largely relieved of the charge of cowardice. But on the whole, we must follow the order of time as given by Paul. We do not, however, know whether this visit of Peter was before the breach between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark (Acts 15:36–41) or after the return of Paul from the second tour (Acts 18:22 f.). If the latter is true, Barnabas had also come back to Antioch (Gal. 2:13). Patrick [31] thinks that this visit was not long after the Conference, probably before the breach with Barnabas. At any rate, Peter at Antioch practices social equality with the Gentiles, just as Paul and Barnabas and the rest of the Jewish Christians there did (Gal. 2:13), and just as Peter did in the house of Cornelius, though he apologized for the act then (Acts 10:28), and at Jerusalem when called to account for it (11:1–18). Evidently the question of social equality was not raised in the Conference at Jerusalem.

"Certain came from James," says Paul (Gal. 2:12). Patrick [32] admits that they had some connection with James and may have borne a commission from James, though not to Peter. It is possible, of course, that rumors of Peter's liberty in the matter of social intercourse may have reached Jerusalem (cf. Acts 11:1 ff.), where the pharisaic element in the church was very sensitive on this point. It is difficult, however, to believe that James would have felt called upon to send a reprimand to Peter on the subject, even granting that James opposed this conduct of Peter.

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[31] *Op. cit.*, p. 188.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

The Judaizers at Antioch seem to have claimed the sanction of James and the rest at Jerusalem in their opposition to Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:1, 24 f.), and it is entirely possible that on this occasion the visitors from Jerusalem claimed a connection with James that was not true. Hort [33] thinks it probable that James merely meant "to send cautions to Peter," with no thought of a rebuke, and that the messengers proceeded to frighten Peter with threats of a report to James about his conduct at Antioch.

It is undoubtedly true that the horizon of Jerusalem was not that of Antioch and that Paul would have less sympathy for what Peter did under fear of consequences at Jerusalem than for James in Jerusalem, who might not fully comprehend developments at Antioch. But the Epistle of James and his speech at the Conference make me slow to believe that he had gone over to the position of the Judaizers, as Peter did at Antioch. Paul boldly charged Peter, and even Barnabas, not with a change of conviction but with hypocrisy (Gal. 2:13 f.). Fortunately, it was only a temporary lapse, and both stepped back to the side of Paul in his championship of a gospel of equality and freedom for all.

Paul makes no formal charge against James, and under all the circumstances I prefer to think that James has been misrepresented at Antioch by the visitors from Jerusalem, who dared to use his powerful name to whip Peter into line. At any rate, James, not Peter, seems to be the master spirit at Jerusalem, as Paul is at Antioch.

Befriending Paul on His Last Visit

Paul came to Jerusalem for the last time in the spring (probably 57 or 58) with a heavy heart. He reveals his appre-

[33] F. J. A. Hort, *Judaistic Christianity* (New York: Macmillan and Co., n.d.), p. 81.

hensions in Romans 15:31–33 and in his address at Miletus (Acts 20:18–35). He has made a brave fight for liberty in Christ almost all over the Roman Empire, but the Judaizers have not ceased their attacks upon him. In particular, during his long absence from Jerusalem he has been grossly misrepresented there. He has been frequently warned of trouble if he came, but he is determined to come in the hope of setting matters right in Jerusalem and so preventing a schism in Christianity. He had won at the Conference at Jerusalem some seven or eight years before.

Hort [34] thinks that Paul entered the city "with much precaution and avoidance of observation" under the shelter of Mnason (Acts 21:16). At any rate, the brethren received him gladly (21:17), and on the next day Paul made a formal call on "James; and all the elders were present" (21:18). So here James is still at the head of the work in Jerusalem as at the Conference. The apostles were present then as they seem to be absent now. This is not a conference but merely a friendly meeting. Paul's rehearsal of his work among the Gentiles meets with the most cordial expressions of satisfaction (21:20).

Paul is among his friends, who tell him of a gross misrepresentation of his position that is current among the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem to the effect that he teaches that Jewish Christians must forsake Moses and the customs of the law (21:21).[35] They do not believe it themselves and only wish to help Paul clear up the matter without interfering at all with the decision of the Conference about the freedom of the Gentiles (21:22–25). They suggest that Paul join with four men in a Nazarite vow, pay the charges for their purification and for his own, and let all the Jewish Christians see him in the

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 106.

[35] This "informing" was done by the Judaizers, who dinned it into the ears of the people.

act of worship and ritual observance of the ceremonial law, thus proving "that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law" (21:24).

The matter seemed simple enough. Paul had not opposed the observance of the law on the part of Jewish Christians. Galatians was written in defense of Gentile liberty. There was no effort to commit Paul to the necessity of the law for salvation. As a matter of fact, Paul had kept up his observance of the Jewish customs save as they affected separation from the Gentiles. So Paul accepted the advice and made the offering, "purifying himself with them" (21:26). Apparently the plan succeeded in setting Paul right with the mass of the church in Jerusalem.

The trouble that led to his arrest arose from the attack of some Jews (not Christians) from Ephesus, who accused Paul of defaming the Temple while in the very act of doing worship in the Temple. We do not know whether the plan of the elders was the plan of James. Certainly if he had disapproved he would have spoken out, as the meeting was at his house. But it was all meant in the utmost kindness to Paul, and it is not possible to show that it was unwise. The incident shows the greatest friendliness between Paul and James and the frankest recognition on Paul's part of the great worth and influence of James himself. There is no other reference to James in the New Testament unless it appears in Hebrews 13:7, 17, "them that have the rule over you."

The Story of His Death

Clement of Alexandria [36] says that James the Just "was thrown from the gable [of the temple], and beaten to death by a fuller with a club." Hegesippus [37] gives a long and leg-

[36] Hypotyp. vii. apud Eusebius H. E., II. 1. 3.
[37] Also preserved in Eusebius H. E., II. xxiii. 4–18.

endary account of the death of James to the effect that the people of Jerusalem who called James "the Just" were so enraged when he bore witness to Jesus as the Son of man that they flung him down from the gable of the Temple, stoned him, and a fuller clubbed him. "And they buried him on the spot by the temple, and his monument still remains by the temple."

But Josephus [38] gives an entirely different and much more credible narrative of the death of James, placing it about A.D. 62 or 63. He charges the Sadducees through the high priest Ananus with the death of James and adds: "Ananus, therefore, as being a person of this character, and thinking that he had a suitable opportunity, through Festus being dead, and Albinus still on his journey (to Judaea), assembles a Sanhedrin of judges; and he brought before it the brother of Jesus who is called Christ (his name was James) and some others, and delivered them to be stoned, on a charge of being transgressors of the law." So he won a martyr's crown. He was called "the Just." He had accused the wicked rich of killing "the righteous one" (James 5:6).

[38] Ant. xx. ix. 1. It is interesting to note that Prof. F. C. Burkitt, of Cambridge University, has boldly championed the genuineness of Josephus' testimony to Jesus.

II

To the Twelve Tribes Which Are of the Dispersion

Simple Address

The writer is wonderfully simple and direct in his greeting as compared with Paul in Romans 1:1–7, for instance. There is no principal verb, and the nominative absolute occurs with the infinitive, as is so common in the letters found in the papyri. Originally a word like "sends" may have been used also. But this short address is in perfect keeping with the business-like character of James and the pointed, pungent tone of the epistle.

The Readers

They are evidently not a local church. "The twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion" naturally refers to the Jews who are scattered in the Gentile world outside of Palestine. The technical term *diaspora* occurs in only two other places in the New Testament (John 7:35; 1 Peter 1:1). In John the word has its usual significance. The Jewish leaders scoffed at Jesus as a failure in Palestine. Perhaps he meant to go and teach the Jews of the dispersion. The term "twelve tribes" in James merely means the Jews as a whole in the dispersion, for the tribes were not preserved in a distinctive way outside of Palestine.

The "lost ten tribes" evidently had no significance for James. As a matter of fact, they are no more "lost" than Judah and Benjamin. The Jews of Palestine after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans were once more scattered abroad, as their ancestors had been twice before, to mingle as "Jews" in various parts of the world. Doubtless, modern Jews are simply a blend of all the twelve tribes. At the time when James wrote, the Jews were very numerous in all the great commercial centers of the world, such as Alexandria, Antioch, Babylon, Ephesus, Miletus, Pergamum, Rome, Thessalonica. But it is more than probable that James has in mind chiefly the Eastern dispersion in Babylonia and Mesopotamia, as Peter (1 Peter 1:1) addressed the Western dispersion.

But was James writing to Jews who were not Christians? Was he making an appeal to the non-Christian Jews of the dispersion to become Christians? The idea is not without fascination in itself. Dr. J. H. Moulton [1] contends that this is precisely what James has done, as is shown by the avoidance of specific reference to Christ and to the cross so as not to give offense to the Jews whom he wishes to win. Dr. George Milligan [2] replies that it is not possible to think of "a Christian teacher of James's position suppressing his distinctive beliefs under any circumstances whatsoever." But the author does *not* conceal his view of Jesus. In the very first verse he speaks of "the Lord Jesus Christ," and these words give his human name Jesus, his title Christ (Messiah), and his lordship (deity). Besides, in 2:1 James speaks of Jesus as the object of faith and so of worship, as Moffatt [3] correctly has it: "As you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Glory." See also 5:7, "until the coming of the Lord" (cf. 5:8).

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[1] *The Expositor*, VII. iv. p. 45 ff.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 112.

[3] *A New Translation of the New Testament.* Besides, in 3:9 James speaks of "the Lord and Father" (God).

There are no doctrinal discussions of the cross and the resurrection, but all this is distinctly implied. James also announces himself as a Christian in 1:1 and could not wish to conceal the gospel if he meant to win Jews to Christ. Moreover, he draws a distinction between the Christians ("ye") and their oppressors ("they," apparently rich Jews) in 2:7: "Do not they blaspheme the honorable name, by which ye are called?" That "name" is the name of Christ.[4] Compare also 2:6: "Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats?" Besides, James claims the readers as believers, "my brethren," in 2:1 and 5:7 f. There are, doubtless, passages where James pictures unbelieving Jews, as in 2:6 f. just mentioned and in particular 5:1–6, that vivid apostrophe to the rich Jews of the time.

In 1 Peter 1:1 we find the other instance of *diaspora*, or dispersion. Here Peter seems to mean by "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" not merely Jews or Jewish Christians but all Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, in the spiritual dispersion, "sojourners" from the true Palestine or promised land (heaven). Is this the idea of James? Zahn[5] takes this position and finds that the writer is addressing all Christians in general, whether those persons would be Jews or Gentiles.

But surely the author has in mind simply Christian Jews outside of Palestine. The use of the word "synagogue" as a place of worship (James 2:2) on a par with "church" (5:14) argues for this interpretation. He is addressing the Christian Jews, who now have many problems, and he may have hoped by means of these believing Jews to reach the wider circle of unbelieving Jews. He speaks of Abraham as "our father"

[4] Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
[5] Einl. i. 5, 6.

(2:21). He assumes that for his readers the Mosaic law is still binding (2:9–11; 4:11).[6]

The Occasion

This we do not know. Unlike most of Paul's epistles, there are no personal details. We are left to conjecture, as in the case of Jude and 1 John. The picture drawn in the epistle is that of Jewish Christians of the poorer classes, with a small number of richer brethren (1:10), struggling for life in the midst of a social and economic environment that was utterly unsympathetic, not to say hostile. The process of adjustment was difficult and perilous. There were perils to the individual and to the church life, and James shows real mastery of the situation that confronted the Jewish Christians in the middle of the first century in the scattered regions where they were found. He writes to them in a firm tone but with manifest understanding and sympathy.

Character of the Epistle

The book, small as it is, is a little gem in conception and expression. It reminds one of portions of the book of Proverbs, some of the Psalms, portions of the Prophets, the Twelve Patriarchs, the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, the Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, and the Sermon on the Mount. It is quite possible that both Paul and Peter had read the Epistle of James; at least there are several coincidences between them. At any rate, there seems to be some literary connection between some of Paul's epistles (Rom., 1 Cor., Gal.), 1 Peter and Hebrews, and the Epistle of James. Some contend that the epistle makes use of these New Testament books. M. Jones [7] thinks that the author had some knowledge of the

[6] Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
[7] *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

Stoic philosophers, but this could have come through Hellenistic Judaism, as for instance the Wisdom of Solomon and Philo.

The author, as already shown, writes in the smooth and easy *Koine* of a gifted and cultivated Jew of Palestine. One does not have to say with Patrick [8] that James had a wide knowledge of classical Greek. He may never have read a line of "classical" Greek, but he knew well the current Greek of his day and used it with fine skill. It is not a labored production and is in no sense artificial. The author is full of the Old Testament and writes like one of the prophets; yet he has a firm grip upon the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The book forms a fine link between the Old and New Testaments. James, the brother of the Lord Jesus, understands the Old Testament and loves Moses still. He seeks to interpret Christianity more fully on its ethical and social side to the Jewish Christians of his time, who are in sad need of help, beset as they are by Jew and Gentile, and with an imperfect grasp of the new gospel. They find in this epistle just what they need to make practice correspond to profession, to square life with creed. The lesson is still needed today. There is a peculiar pertinence about the teaching of James that appeals to modern men who are nothing if not practical.

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[8] *Op. cit.*, p. 298.

III

Joy in Trial

Evidently these early Jewish Christians had their share of trial. Who, alas, does not have his portion? The problem with us all is to learn how to find the spring of joy in the midst of sorrow. There are always perplexities and anxieties. The sea is restless even in its moments of calm beauty.

Variety in Trials (1:2)

There is the tone of an elder brother in this epistle, and we see it at the start when James says "my brothers." It is no perfunctory phrase with him. It is "trials," not "temptations," that James here has in mind, though the same word probably means temptation in 1:12. The word in the Greek came to have either sense, though originally it meant only to try, to attempt, just as our English word "tempt" was at first simply "try." But it is a short step from "try" to "make trial of" one when suspicion exists or evil desire arises. Hence all through the Greek we find the old Greek word used in both senses. The New Testament usage varies. There are a half dozen other passages where the word has the idea of trial (Luke 22:28; Acts 20:19; Gal. 4:14; 1 Peter 1:6; 4:12; Rev. 3:10). In 1 Peter 1:6 the identical expression "manifold trials" appears. Oesterley [1] wrongly insists that "temptation" is the meaning

[1] W. E. Oesterley, "The General Epistle of James," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), IV, 63.

in James 1:2 on the ground that "the writer's Judaism is stronger than his Christianity," and he then uses it as an argument against the genuineness of the book.

A soldier (Parry) does have "true joy" in victory over temptation, like Wordsworth's "happy warrior," but that is beside the mark here. There is no conflict here with the avoidance of temptation urged by Jesus (Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4; Matt. 26:41; Luke 22:40). James refers rather to external trials into which men fall—trials that are not only unwelcome but also unsought and unexpected.[2] It is almost the picture of a stumble in the dark when one finds himself surrounded by hostile forces, just as the poor man fell among robbers (Luke 10:30).

Besides, one may be surrounded by all sorts of trials at once and not merely any sort of trial (Moffatt). The word "manifold" is really many-colored, variegated, spotted, mottled, pied, dappled. "It never rains but it pours," we say at such a time. The same word is applied to the sicknesses and torments of body and mind which Jesus healed (Matt. 4:24). It is used of the evil desires that lead silly women astray (2 Tim. 3:6), of the lusts and pleasures which once the Cretans served (Titus 3:3), of the variety in the manifestation of God's power in connection with the gospel (Heb. 2:4), of the many sorts of strange teachings then afloat (Heb. 13:9) of which we are now beginning to learn something (incipient Gnosticism and the early stages of Mithraism, for example), of the many trials which brought sorrow to the Christians (1 Peter 1:6), and of the many sides to the grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). God has grace for every trial whatever its color, whether black or blue, yellow or green, red or crimson.

The way to face them all is with joy in the heart and a smile on the face. We are not asked to rush into trials and to

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[2] Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

make mock martyrs of ourselves. We are not asked to rejoice because of the trials, many or few. Much depends on how we treat the problem of trial, much of which is beyond our control, like poverty in wisdom (James 1:5) and in substance (1:9) and like persecution (2:6 f.).

We are not to be blind to facts nor to submit tamely to what can be cured and should not be endured. James is not a cynic or a stoic but a victorious Christian who has learned the lesson that thankful joy is easier and wiser than mere dull resignation (Plummer, *in loco*). Each trouble may be met by a special kind of joy as its antidote. The common idea about "all joy" is that James thereby means pure joy, nothing but joy. "Greet it as pure joy" (Moffatt). That is possible, though it may also mean "bring to bear all that joy has to offer." It does not mean (Mayor) that all of joy is contained in this view. At any rate, it is much to know that joy in suffering is possible, as many saints can testify who have reached the pure air of fellowship with Jesus in suffering (cf. Phil. 3:10). The Brother of James said: "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you" (Matt. 5:10–12).

This is part of the fellowship of Christ and of the saints, the "sunshine band" of those who have learned to smile in the midst of tears, like the sunshine in the rain. Paul was able to say: "But we also rejoice in our tribulations" (Rom. 5:3). This is not the joy of the fanatic or of the fakir or of the rhapsodist. It is the joy of the soul that is at peace with God in Christ and has also more than earth and hell can take away, the peace that passes all understanding. The disciples rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for

the Name" (Acts 5:41). Even Marcus Aurelius said: "Say not that that which hath befallen thee is bad fortune, but that to endure it nobly is good fortune."

The Product of Trial (*1:3*)

The rule of Christian joy thus expounded stands the test of experience. The word "knowing" is the one used for experimental knowledge as opposed to mere intellectual apprehension. The tense (present participle) expresses continuous acquisition of fresh knowledge from experience. It is the school of life where we learn most of what we really know. The position of James is thus in thorough harmony with psychology. The command to rejoice in the midst of manifold trials, paradoxical though it seems, is one that the Jewish Christians knew to be true from their experience of grace. Johnstone [3] has a fine word: "Affliction lets down a blazing torch into his own nature—and he sees many things which he little expected to see." One of the marvels of modern science is the use of electric light by divers at the bottom of the sea to take pictures of sea life.

It is the biological conception that James has in mind. The law of life (nature and grace) works through personal experience and not by mechanical impartation. What do we learn by experience? "That the proving of your faith worketh patience." Moffatt has it: "That the sterling temper of your faith produces endurance."

The notion is plainly that of testing. See the same phrase in 1 Peter 1:7. Thus James, as Paul, regards faith as "the very foundation of religion" (Mayor). The verb from which the adjective is derived is common enough for testing a yoke of oxen (Luke 14:19), the spirits (1 John 4:1), work by fire (1 Cor. 3:13), genuineness of love (2 Cor. 8:8), all things

[3] Lectures on the Epistle of James, p. 73.

(1 Thess. 5:21). Peter (1 Peter 1:7) explains the adjective by the verb (tested by fire). Compare Sirach 2:5: "For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity." One is reminded of the Sermon on the Mount. "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16).

Patience is *patientia* (*patior*) and is called by Philo the queen of the virtues. The Jews (Oesterley, *in loco*) had had ample need of this virtue in their checkered history. It is just the opposite of the "superman" of Nietzsche, the triumph of might over right, the will to get what one wishes, right or wrong. There is inevitable conflict between selfish militarism and Christianity. It is a pity that Christians have left it to socialists to make the most vigorous protest against war. But alas, both Christians and socialists are swept under by the vortex of war *nolens volens*. And yet by "patience" James does not mean inertia or lack of ambition. It is not complacent self-satisfaction but the triumph of regulated consideration of the welfare of others, the victory of love over greed, the joy of doing without that others may be happy, the happiness of enduring ill for the sake of Jesus.

It is very hard to remain under misfortune (the literal meaning of the Greek word for patience) when it cannot be helped. James does not mean that we are not to try to cure any of the ills of life, not to overcome ignorance, poverty, disease, crime. There is here no surcease for the war on the evil conditions of modern life in home or city or state. But many things cannot be changed. Others will be alleviated by and by. Meanwhile the Christian can rise to the height of cheerful, joyful patience. It is the practice of cheerfulness that we so much need. We do not have to shut our eyes to the facts of life and of the human reason and deny the existence of sin and sickness. We can conquer the bitter results of these evils by the joy in Christ that drives away despair.

This patience is the product of trial. We are not born with a

supply of patience. It is not bestowed in fulness upon us at the new birth. Like the manna, we need a fresh supply each morning. But the habit of mind termed patience is gradually wrought in us by the discipline of experience. Bitterness is a possible fruit of sorrow and hard experiences. Bitterness is written all over some sad faces. That terrible calamity can be missed, will be missed, if one walks in the way of him who said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28 f.). It may not be easy and light at first, but it becomes so in the presence of Jesus.

Nobly does Wordsworth interpret it for us all:

> Who, doomed to go in company with pain,
> And fear and bloodshed, miserable train!
> Turned his necessity to glorious gain;
> In face of these doth exercise a power
> Which is our human nature's highest dower;
> Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
> Of their bad influence, and their good receives.

Perfection by Patience (1:4)

There is no other way than the slow way of life. The mushroom springs up in a night and goes as quickly away. The oak grows a few inches a year and lasts for centuries. The finest product in God's garden is the soul of man, ripe with the long years of toil and sorrow. Luther Burbank learned some of the witchery of nature by watching her ways with plant life. He showed great patience and has much to show for it. Give patience a chance to do its work and keep on giving it a fair show. Ole Bull said that if he missed practicing on his violin one day, he noticed the difference in his playing. If he missed

two days, other musicians noticed it. If he skipped three days, all the world knew it.

"Only, let your endurance be a finished product" (Moffatt). It comes to that in all great achievements, for the test is endurance. The goal is at the end of the race, where Jesus is the author and finisher of the faith which we possess (Heb. 12:2). "We are become partakers of Christ, if we hold . . . firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:14). "But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

Patience calls for courage; discouragement leads to impatience and failure. There is need of long-suffering (Col. 1:11), if we get the "finished product." The word for perfect here occurs also in James 1:17, 25; 3:2. The word, like the substantive, has a double usage (cf. *finis* and our *end*), either limit or aim. So the perfect man may be regarded in the absolute sense, the limit, as the perfect Man Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:13), or as on the way to the goal (no longer a child but a developed man, as in 1 Cor. 2:6; Phil. 3:15). "The perfect" (1 Cor. 13:10) is still to come, but there is "perfect love" (1 John 4:18). We are to aim after the perfection of God himself (Matt. 5:48). Paul's ambition was to present each one "perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28). Compare also Colossians 4:12. Here James has his eye on the goal which is at the end of the long road. He knows full well (3:2) that in many things we all stumble, but we must persevere. Patience must do its "perfect work," that ye may be "perfect."

But James takes a latitudinal look at the work of patience, not merely the longitudinal view—the view that ye may be "entire, lacking nothing," "complete, with never a defect" (Moffatt). This word for entire (cf. *integer*) means complete in all its parts, whole, not unsound anywhere. At the end of the race we are to be fully developed and sound to the core in heart and limb. The word is used of stones untouched by a tool (Deut. 27:6), of a body without blemish. Epictetus (bk.

III, chap. xxvi, § 25) uses the word of a vessel which one finds whole, unbroken, and useful. It is used of a complete or unbroken household. In the papyri Philo uses both words together, as James does here.

The substantive is used of the "perfect soundness" of the man just healed by Peter and John (Acts 3:16). This adjective occurs with "righteousness" (Wisd. 15:13) and "worship" or "religion" (4 Macc. 17). The adjective is used by Paul in his prayer for the Thessalonians, "preserved entire, without blame" (1 Thess. 5:23). This is what Jesus does for his glorious church, which is to be without "spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). Jesus, our High Priest, "has perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Alas, Isaiah (1:6) found Israel wholly wanting in this soundness. James's ideal is that we shall fall short in nothing. Our destiny is to dwell in the family of God and to be like Jesus, our elder Brother (1 John 3:2). This ultimate divine fulness is not the self-sufficiency of the stoics.

Shortage in Wisdom (1:5)

"Defective in wisdom," Moffatt puts it. It is the same word that occurs at the end of verse 4. James is fond of catching up a preceding word and going on with it, even if, as here, in a new sense. "If any of you lacketh wisdom," James gently hints. Who is it that does not feel his shortcoming here, at times with painful intensity?

What does James mean by wisdom? It is more than knowledge. It is more than mere intelligent apprehension of acquired knowledge. Tennyson says: "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers." James shows familiarity with the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach (Ecclus.) [4] and possibly also the so-called Wisdom of Solomon. Certainly he knows the book of

[4] See Plummer, *op. cit.*, pp. 72 f., for proof.

Proverbs. But here he does not use wisdom in a philosophical or mystical sense.

With James wisdom is the right use of one's opportunities in holy living. It is living like Christ in accord with the will of God. In 3:13–17 he gives a formal discussion of the two sorts of wisdom. Bede suggests that we need wisdom to know how to look at trial in the true light. Yes, and we need it to give patience the chance to do its perfect work. Paul uses wisdom in the special sense of God's wisdom as shown in the gospel as infinitely superior to the wisdom of the world which scouted the cross of Christ. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect" (the mature, 1 Cor. 2:6, AV).

In the Old Testament wisdom is sometimes the intelligence of God (Prov. 8:22–30). "Ten measures of wisdom came down from heaven, and nine of them fell to the lot of the Holy Land" (*Kiddushim,* 49*b*). With James the source of wisdom is God, not the Jews. So then, when our supply runs short, ask of God. It is like a bank to which we go to get our money. God is the banker whose supply of wisdom never gives out. Unlike other bankers, he asks no security save the name of Jesus.[5] That name gives us full credit at the bank of heaven.

On that basis God "gives to all men without question or reproach" (Moffatt). We have it expressed as "liberally" in the standard versions. It is a rather difficult word to translate into English. It means simple, singlefold, sincere. Compare the "single" eye in Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34. In Romans 12:8 it is not clear whether singleness or liberality is the idea, but "liberality" is obviously correct in 2 Corinthians 8:2, "the riches of their liberality." So it is in 9:11, 13, but "singleness of heart" in Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22.

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[5] The late J. Pierpont Morgan testified before a committee of the U. S. Senate that he loaned money primarily on character, not financial ability.

Oesterley finds the notion of James to be "singleness of aim, the aim being the imparting of benefit without requiring anything in return." Likewise, Bengel interprets it by *simpliciter*. Either idea makes good sense, for surely God gives to us all with singleness of purpose and also without bargaining on God's part, for there is no idea of reciprocity. "Without question" (Moffatt) suggests an understanding with God, which is true. It is the normal, natural thing for a child of God to come to God and ask of him, for he "upbraideth not." A fool upbraids, the Son of Sirach says (Ecclus. 20:15). Instead of upbraiding us for asking, rather we are made to wonder why we did not ask sooner.

God does not chide us for our folly but gives us good measure of wisdom to take its place. This is the literal truth, as many self-confessed fools of the world are glad to testify. They have left the folly of a worldly, selfish, sinful life for the rich joy of the service of God in Christ. The change may come in a moment, for after all, this new view of life and the power to live it may be had for the asking. "And it shall be given him." It will be given on request, with no other identification than the plea of the sinner who comes in the name of Jesus, the "open sesame" to the treasures of heaven, himself the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30) in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden (Col. 2:3). God does ask of us that we use this wisdom for his glory and for the blessing of other lives, the enrichment of other hearts.

Doubting Prayer (*1:6–8*)

Jesus (Matt. 7:7 f.) had urged the disciples to ask, with the promise that God would answer.

There is a condition attached to the wide-open invitation in James 1:5. "But let him ask in faith," James adds. By faith James means not a body of doctrine but trust in God, a working confidence in God that leads one to ask and to expect to

receive what he asks. It is certain that God does not answer some prayers, at least in the way expected. Some requests ought not to be granted, in fact ought never to be made. Prayer may be very foolish as well as very wise. God does not offer to grant every whim of a spoiled and petulant child. But assuming that one is asking for wisdom, which surely is a proper prayer for anyone to make, even so he may miss it because he does not exercise wisdom in the asking. He must not chill the ardor of his desire by hesitation and doubt. Let him ask, "nothing doubting."

To doubt is to have a divided mind that draws him two ways, like the poor donkey that starved because he could not choose between the two stacks of hay. Such a man is like a wave of the sea ("Like a cork floating on the wave, now carried towards the shore, now away from it," Mayor), one of the most transitory things imaginable, driven by the wind and tossed into sea foam (whitecaps) as if blown by a fan or bellows, a veritable "brain storm" of perplexity and indecision.

God does answer prayer, but not the prayer of a man who insults the Giver of whom he asks a favor. Timid faith is quite another thing. That Jesus honored, as in the case of the father who first said, "But if thou canst do any thing" (Mark 9:22). Jesus rebuked him for his "if thou canst." Then the anxious father cried out: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

There are many difficulties in the way of trust in God today. Science has left many minds groping in the dark without God, feeling after him if haply they may find him, not knowing that he is nigh to each of us. We do not have an absentee God. He can and does hear the cry of his children for help. If *SOS* can find a response over the wind and the wave to the call of the sinking ship, surely it is not strange that the Father of our spirits will hear our call to him. So it will be, "if ye

have faith and doubt not," almost the very words used by James.

Jesus had to rebuke his disciples for their lack of faith (Matt. 8:26) when they thought they were perishing from wind and wave. And Simon Peter doubted after he began to walk on the water and started at once to sink. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" says Jesus to Peter (Matt. 14:31). Peter had a divided mind. "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." He does not expect anything, and he is not disappointed. What a commentary is this sentence upon the halfhearted praying, the lack of interest, the worldly-minded passive worship of many modern Christians. There is no wrestling with God in prayer for victory.

"Double-minded creature that he is, wavering at every turn" (Moffatt). The double-minded man is like the two-faced man (Mr. Facing Both Ways). Sirach (2:13) speaks of the sinner coming to two paths and being unable to choose. Such a man perishes at the crossroads. Compare James 4:8 for the only other use of the word in the New Testament, though common enough elsewhere. Such indecision goes into duplicity, as Jesus shows about the evil eye and the single eye (Matt. 6:22 f.). It is a miserable life, as anyone knows who leads a double life. The double heart leads to the double life, with its pretended double standard of morals. Clement of Rome says: "Wretched are the double-minded, who doubt in their heart." No wonder he becomes "unstable in all his ways," not able to stand in all his goings. He wobbles and finally reels like a drunken man. Such inconstancy winds up in hypocrisy or abandonment to sin.

The Democracy of Faith (1:9–11)

James returns to the keynote of "all joy" (v. 2) and uses the word "glory." The positive note of exultation is the mark

of the true Christian against the double-minded man. The pessimist is not a representative of Christianity. The true optimist is not, however, blind to the facts of life. He can glory in God in the midst of all sorts of trials and conditions, whether in high or low estate. His joy is independent of earthly estate. The "cotter's Saturday night" may be as happy as the one in the castle nearby. Class distinctions are no cause for pride in a spiritual democracy like the church of Jesus Christ. We need in Christianity no "princes of the church" in the Roman Catholic sense. Pride of rank among the twelve disciples was a source of grief to Jesus. The rich and the poor are one in Christ Jesus, and all are poor, miserable sinners saved by grace.

Johnstone [6] calls this section "Rich Poor and Poor Rich." That is true and is the probable interpretation here. The humble [7] brother may, after all, be the richest man in the church—rich in grace, in love, in joy, in peace, in righteousness, in fellowship. This is "his high estate," which rises sheer above hovel or palace. Thank God that this infinite wealth of the spirit is still open to the poor all over the world who find the door of competency closed in their faces. The pious poor is more than a phrase. It is often literal fact.

The papyri discoveries [8] bear eloquent testimony to the words of Paul about the membership of the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:26–29). The papyri letters and other documents are chiefly from the middle and lower classes and reflect the actual life of the very people from whom the gospel made most

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[6] *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

[7] There is the utmost contrast between this use of "humble" and that in Epictetus, with whom humility is an object of scorn and contempt, a meanness unworthy of man. See bk. III, chap. ii, § 14. Cf. Sharp, *Epictetus and the New Testament*, pp. 130, 133.

[8] Cf. Deissmann, *op. cit.*, p. 392; *St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, trans. by Lionel R. M. Strachan (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1912), p. 47.

of its converts (fishermen, carpenters, publicans, tentmakers, etc.). There were already some wealthy members of the early churches, men like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Barnabas of Cyprus. There were "not many mighty," but there were some. There soon came to be large numbers of slaves in the churches when the gospel spread among the Gentiles. But already social problems of an acute nature were on hand when James wrote. In fact, we see such problems in the early chapters of Acts, when Ananias and Sapphira wished to get credit for a generosity that they were not willing to show and when high feeling arose in the distribution of the funds for the Aramean (Palestinian) and Hellenistic widows among the Jewish Christians. At no point are people more sensitive than about money.

So the rich brother is to be reminded of his humiliation, "in that he is made low," placed on a level with the "lowly brother." They meet on the level in Christ. Each is as high and as low as the other—no more, no less. The rich man is not to glory over the poor man, nor is the poor brother to cringe in the presence of the rich brother. This is the democracy of faith, the universality of Christ.

The rich brother is in constant peril of pride of possession, and so James reminds him of the fate of the beautiful flower of the grass which springs up quickly and withers before the burning heat and falls off. It is a striking adaptation of the language of Isaiah (40:6–8), using the imagery for another purpose. 1 Peter 1:24 says: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass." Christ brings all men to their true level, the common humanity in us all, the sonship in him that makes us heirs of heaven. Moffatt changes "his high estate" to "when he is raised," and "in that he is made low" to "in being lowered." He seems to understand that James refers to the possible ups and downs of life. It will be easy for the lowly brother in that case to rejoice when he be-

comes rich; but how about the rich brother when he becomes poor?

Plummer (*in loco*) refuses to see a "brother" at all in the rich man, but only one of the rich Jews who oppressed the early Christians, as in James 5:1–6. But that gives an Ebionitic tone to the epistle. James does indulge in irony, but he is apparently sincere in his picture here. The rich brother will fade away in his goings, as if James has in mind a salesman whose business dries up like a flower. Riches truly have wings and fly away. They are sweet like the rose but soon vanish from us forever.

IV
The Way of Temptation

James powerfully sketches the natural history of temptation if yielded to and the glory of victory if overcome. The other sense (temptation) of the word used for trial in 1:2 occurs here. Moffatt indeed takes trial as the idea in 1:12 also (so does Hort *in loco*), but certainly in verse 13 we have to say "temptation." It is most likely that the idea of temptation is present in 1:12. Here James returns to the discussion of the other side of the blessing of trials, namely, the blessing of temptation endured. As a matter of fact, he has not really digressed from the subject. He merely discusses one aspect.

Standing the Test (1:12)

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." We must never forget that Jesus warned us against rushing into temptation, not merely in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:13; Luke 11:4) but also in the agony of Gethsemane, when Satan had come upon him with renewed energy in spite of repeated defeats by Jesus since the wilderness temptations (Matt. 26:41; Luke 22:40). Jesus urged the disciples to pray to be spared temptation. No one knew so well as he the power of the evil one. He had wrestled with him to the end and had conquered where others failed. Temptation is not to be courted, not even for the sake of the experience and the possible victory. Too many go down in the struggle for any to rush into it lightly. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

But if temptation is thrust upon one, then he must fight and win as Jesus did. There is always a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). We must find the way out. Compare Job 5:17: "Behold, happy is the man whom the Lord correcteth." He only is happy (the same word used in the Beatitudes in Matt. 5:3–11) who endures. That is true patience. It is only "when he hath been approved" after standing the test that "he shall receive the crown of life," the victor's crown. The word for approved suggests the furnace that removes the dross and leaves the pure metal. The refiner of silver watches, we are told, till he sees his own image in the metal. Then it is pure. The metal is tested and approved.

"The crown of life" (cf. Rev. 2:10) is probably the wreath of victory in the games (cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 2:5), for Greek games were common in Palestine in the days of Herod the Great and were practiced even in Jerusalem itself (Josephus, *Ant.* 15, 8, 1 f.). It is a crown of kingly glory, but it is bestowed as reward of merit to those who love the Lord Jesus. We may have a reference to a Logion of Jesus not preserved in which he makes this promise: "Blessed is he who hath his raiment white, for he it is who receiveth the crown of joy upon his head." [1] In Proverbs 1:9 we read that the instruction of father and mother "shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head." In Sirach 15:6 we read of "a crown of gladness," and in the *Testimony of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Levi iv. 1) we find "crowns of glory." Love is the way to win this crown —love and the proof of it in enduring temptation and leading "the white life."

Blaming God (1:13)

Whatever doubt exists in verse 12 about trial or temptation vanishes in verse 13. Here it is clearly temptation to evil. Hort

[1] Acta Philippi, Apocal. Apocr. Cf. Resch, Agrapha, 1889, p. 254.

(*in loco*) suggests "tempted by trial," and Moffatt puts it "tried by temptation." Certainly trial becomes a temptation to some men who use it as the excuse for doing wrong. "Though trial in itself is ordered by God for our good, yet the inner solicitation to evil which is aroused by the outer trial is from ourselves" (Mayor). Any trial wrongly used may become a temptation, whereas it was meant for our development and perfection. Temptation is merely one aspect of trial and not a necessary one. But the word is used of the great tempter (1 Thess. 3:5). So Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Mark 1:13). Satan desired to sift the apostles as wheat, to ruin them if possible (Luke 22:31). The Pharisees and the Sadducees sought to tempt Jesus (Matt. 15:1). It is the devil's business to seek to lure another into wrong.

When a man is tempted and yields to the temptation, he is eager to blame someone else for his sin. If he cannot do otherwise, he will blame God for having made him as he is, with evil possibilities. In particular is this true of sexual sin, which Oesterley (*in loco*) thinks James has specifically in mind here. Compare Matthew 5:28; 1 Peter 2:11. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve the serpent. And even Adam blamed God, for he said: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me" (Gen. 3:12).

Some dare to say in so many words: "I am tempted of God." They hold God responsible for their appetites and passions and seek to quiet the conscience thus while they give way to sin. Others hide behind heredity, environment, or evil companions. Even Agamemnon excused himself for his wrong to Achilles by holding Zeus and fate responsible. Sirach (15:11 f.) says: "Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away." The origin of sin is a dark problem, but it is a lazy philosophy or a blind one that shirks human responsibility, or tries to do it. It matters not whether sin is the remnant of the beast in us (surely some men act at times like the

tiger) or the response to evil environment or both, we are merely cowardly when we blame God for our own wrongdoing.

There is no response to evil in God. He is not "man's giant shadow skyward thrown." The absolute holiness and ethical purity of God should at least protect him from the charge of leading us into sin. The worst of men, in their darkest moments of loneliness, sometimes come face to face with God. Then they do not flippantly blame God but confess their sins with broken heart. Two things are true about evil and God. One is that God himself tempts no man to sin. He does send trial but not temptation. We may not understand all the ways of God's providence, but we may rest secure in this: The devil does tempt us. That is his business. And yet James does not refer to Satan by name here, for after all, we ourselves are responsible, as he proceeds to show. It does not help matters with us any more than it did with Eve to lay our sin upon the devil. The other thing that is true is that God cannot be tempted with evil. He cannot be tempted to do evil himself or be led to tempt others with evil. The phrase does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament or in the Septuagint, but it is a paraphrase of a common proverb in the early Christian writings.[2] God does chastise us (Heb. 12:4 f.), but he does not tempt us.

All this is in strong contrast to the Greek and Roman notions of duty, for the heathen gods were credited with all human and even inhuman vices. The gods upon Olympus revel in lust and cruelty, jealousy and hate. They furnish fit ideals for the philosophy of Nietzsche but do not accord with the God of the New Testament, the God of consolation and of peace, of purity and love.

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[2] Cf. Mayor, *op. cit.*, p. 54 f. The devil tried to tempt even Christ, the Son of God.

Snared by One's Own Bait (*1:14*)

The man himself is responsible for his sin, and he need not seek to place the blame elsewhere. The temptation is not a temptation to him if he refuses to listen to the siren's voice. The man is not responsible for the efforts of others to allure him to sin but only in case he listens and yields. Then he is really tempted "when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed."

The figure is very bold and impressive. The word for "drawn away" is used in Oppian for drawing the fish out from its original retreat, beguiling it from under the rock. Then the fish is ready to be snared by the bait. The fish bites at the bait and is caught on the hook. So with a man. He is drawn out by his own lust for the sin placed before him. In the case of sexual sin the impulse is not in itself sinful any more than the fish's hunger for food. The sexual nature is from God and is meant only for blessing for high and holy ends. But the misuse of this impulse is very easy and very dreadful in its results. Satan sets many kinds of bait for unwary boys and girls, men and women, who at first are taken off their guard and then are drawn away by desire stirred within them toward evil. The evil suggestion is entertained, and sin is the outcome.

This very word "entice" is used of hunting (trapping with bait), and then it is used of the harlot who entices to sin. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1:10). Philo speaks of our being "driven by passion or enticed by pleasure." The pitfalls are many in modern life—in the country, in the village, and in the city. The modern demons of drink, drug, and the brothel are busy in finding victims. But the point made by James is that the one who yields does so because of the sin within his own heart.

A person's own evil desire plays the part of temptress

(Plummer), and he is drawn away by it and enticed. "If thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door" (Gen. 4:7) like a panther ready to spring upon the intended victim caught for the moment off guard. One is reminded afresh of the opening chapters of Proverbs, which cannot be excelled by any of the modern books on sex instruction, some of which stimulate more immorality than they prevent. Wise warning is needed and plain talk is demanded, but not pruriency any more than prudery. Alas, that the paw of the modern Moloch draws into the fire so many thousands of young men and women from the homes of our land. The best capital of America is the children, and we lose too much of it in the worst of gambles—the traffic in souls.

The Abortion (1:15)

The natural history of sin as the result of temptation to which one yields is given with scientific accuracy and graphic power: "Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death." Moffatt renders it thus: "Then Desire conceives and breeds Sin, while Sin matures and gives birth to Death." It is a gruesome picture surely. But who can say that it is overdrawn?

The positivist tries to shut God out of the world and so to banish human responsibility; but alas, he cannot banish human woe and anguish of heart. The agnostic flings up his hands in despair and says he does not know and has nothing to say in the presence of nature, "red in tooth and claw." The brutal militarist adopts the rule of physical might wrongly claimed by Nietzsche to be the mark of the superman. Spiritual and moral prowess should dominate brute force in man, else he becomes only a brute himself. He drops back to the law of the jungle and rejects the law of love in the kingdom of heaven. The Christian Scientist blandly

shuts his eyes to such errors of mortal mind as sin and sickness and sorrow and, ostrich-like, cheerfully denies their reality and seeks to blow them away with a puff. But sin is not to be brushed aside in this way.

The words of this verse call for particular remark. "Then" is here the historical order following the temptation to which one yields. His lust drew him forth to the temptation. He yields, and the result is the conception; the embryo develops into sin. This is the first birth, and sin is the child of desire. Desire is not in itself sinful, but it easily falls into sin. Thus in a true sense desire makes sin where there was no sin and so gives birth to sin. But this is not all. Sin in its turn matures and gives birth to death.[3] This second child is like a child born dead.

When sin is born, death is involved like an embryonic parasite that feeds on sin. Desire, sin, death form the biological line of pedigree. The line is short, for "the wages of sin is death," as Paul puts it (Rom. 6:23).[4] The picture in James is that of an abnormal birth like a misshapen animal. I have seen a five-legged cow, the fifth leg on the top of the back standing up straight. When sin is born, death begins (conception) and grows in fascinating power till a new birth comes; and lo, this child is death itself. "The birth of death follows of necessity when once sin is fully formed, for sin from its first beginnings carried death within" (Hort, *in loco*).

The law of death in sin applies to other sins besides the so-called sexual sins which write their history so plainly in the body and the mind and bring a heritage of woe through all the family history. There is here no sowing of wild oats to

[3] Bengel puts it thus: *Peccatum morte gravidum nascitur.* The Targum of Jonathan says that imagination of sin is sinful.

[4] "Wages" means literally the rations of a soldier. The pay of sin is death, and it is always paid.

raise a crop of wheat. The fearful fidelity of modern scientific knowledge throws a lurid light on this passage in James. The sinner makes his bed and lies down in it and drags down with him the helpless ones who are thrown in his care.

As I am writing I receive a copy of *Light*, a magazine published by the World's Purity Federation. The issue for November, 1914, contains an article by a woman who has lived "twenty-five years in the underworld." Her story reads like a commentary on the words of James. She claims to have had the best of that sordid life, but she concludes: "No matter what humiliation a girl has to endure, it is better to endure it than to get into this life. There is nothing in it for any of them. The very best of us get it hard before we die. And, at the best, it is Hell." The issue of death is seen not merely in the diseases of the body but "also in the deterioration of mind and character which accompanies every kind of sin" (Mayor, *in loco*). Death and hell then claim their own.

God, the Source of Good (1:16 f.)

The contrast is sharp. "Be not deceived"; do not wander so in your minds as to think that temptation and sin and death come from God. He is not the source of evil. Rabbi Chaninah says: "No evil thing cometh down from above." Note Jesus in John 8:23 on "above" and "below." James is tenderly affectionate in his appeal on this point—"my beloved brethren." On the contrary, only good comes from God. God is good, and he alone is absolutely good (Mark 10:18).[5] In the Greek the next sentence runs like a hexameter line if one short syllable is considered long by stress of the meter.[6] We need not tarry over a fanciful straining after poetical lines in prose. Oesterley agrees with Ewald in seeing here a quota-

[5] "Good" is here used in the sense of absolute, not relative goodness.

[6] But see Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, op. cit.*, p. 1200.

tion from a Hellenistic poem. It is far more likely just accidental rhythm common enough in good prose. The scholars differ also as to how to translate the sentence. Moffatt has it: "All we are given is good, and all our endowments are faultless."

"The Father of lights" sets God over against the worship of the sun so common among the ancients. Plato (Repub. vi. 505 ff.) compares the sun to the idea of the good. Modern science powerfully illustrates this comparison of James in bringing out what we owe to the sun in the way of light, heat, and life itself. Philo calls God "the Father of the all," the lights (the moon and the stars) and all else in the universe. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:3 f.). Compare Philippians 2:15. God is not only light (1 John 1:5), but all true light comes from him—all the light that lights every man coming into the world (John 1:9).

But the sun appears to move rapidly. Watch the sun drop like a ball of fire at sunset and thus cast a deepening shadow over the earth. The sundial is one of the oldest ways to mark "the shadow that is cast by turning." Mayor quotes Plutarch (Percl. 7) for the use of this figure for shadows cast on the dial. James is here, of course, using popular language, as we still do when we say that the sun rises and sets. But with our Father of lights there is "no change of rising and setting" (Moffatt). He "casts no shadow on the earth." Even the polestar, we now know, whirls on in space, carrying the worlds along with it. But our God is not changeable or whimsical. He does not send now good, now ill. He knows how to give good gifts to those that ask him, yea, the best of all gifts, the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). What seems ill is really good if it comes from God. If one takes his stand by

God's side and looks at his life, he sees God's plan as a whole for his own life and for God's glory.

The New Birth (1:18)

"So far from God tempting us to evil, his will is the cause of our regeneration" (Mayor). He is our Father in a double sense. We owe our original birth to God, in whose image we are made (Gen. 2:7). We owe our spiritual birth likewise to God, who begat us again to a living hope (1 Peter 1:3). The Mishnah (*Surenh.*, iv. 116) says: "A man's father only brought him forth into this world: his teacher, who taught him wisdom, brings him into the life of the world to come." Happy is the father who leads his child also to Christ. But while the word of truth is the instrument used in the instruction (a pointed lesson for parents, teachers, preachers), the actual work of regeneration is due to God as Father, yes, and as Mother also, for the word "brought forth" is the one used of the mother (see by contrast v. 15).

The doctrine of grace here set forth is of a piece with that in Paul's writings (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 1:5), those of Peter (1 Peter 1:3), and of John (1:13). Indeed, Jesus himself is quoted as saying: "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). As the seed of sin produces death, so the seed of God produces life (1 John 3:9). It is interesting to note this piece of fundamental theology in so practical a writer as James, who lays special emphasis on works as proof of life. But James has no such idea as some careless and shallow theologians who think that a man can galvanize himself into spiritual life by imitative ethics. The man must be born again, as Jesus said so impressively to Nicodemus (John 3:3). The miracle of birth must precede growth and development.

We are not to puzzle ourselves too much over the mysteries of spiritual biology. We know that the impulse and

purpose[7] come from God (John 1:13). What we do know is that God honors and uses the word of truth, both spoken and written. If this is true, what a responsibility belongs to us for diligence and urgency in the use of the word of truth.

By the truth we are set free from sin and error (John 8:31 f.). The word of truth is the gospel of salvation (Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5), the word of life (1 John 1:1). God's word is truth (John 17:17), and the words of Jesus are spirit and life (John 6:63). The word of truth, when combined with the power of God (2 Cor. 6:7), quickens into life. So James emphasizes the importance of the human element in the new birth, while rightly making God supreme in the act of regeneration. We must reach men with the word of God. We must pass it on to the thirsty, the hungry, the dying. Every church is, or ought to be, a lifesaving station, a rescue mission, a teaching center, a powerhouse, a lighthouse radiating knowledge of God in Christ.

The purpose of God in renewing us by the word of truth is that we in turn should win others. We are not an end in ourselves, though God does save us. He saves us that we may serve. We are to be a sort of first fruits,[8] not the full harvest. There are fields upon fields beyond us ready for the reaper. We are just a beginning, just a foretaste. We whet the appetite for larger, richer blessings. "The trees that are a fortnight to the fore are the talk and delight of the town." [9] One spring my baby boy noticed a tree without leaves when all

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[7] Bengel says: *voluntate amantissima, liberrima, purissima, foecundissima.*

[8] The inscriptions (Ditt., *Syll.*, 587 [263]) use the word for the first fruits to Demeter and Kore, but James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1915), p. 54, give many examples from the papyri and the inscriptions where "gift" or "sacrifice" seems sufficient.

[9] J. Rendel Harris, "The Elements of a Progressive Church," *Present Day Papers,* May, 1901.

the rest were in leaf. "What is the matter with this tree?" he asked.

Christ has introduced a new order into the world. He himself is the real first fruits (1 Cor. 15:20). But there are others through all the ages—those that ripen first and fast, show the way, give promise of the future. So Epaenetus was a first fruits of Asia for Christ (Rom. 16:5); the household of Stephanas was in Corinth (1 Cor. 16:15). Blessings rest on the first fruits for salvation in any church, any town, any family. They are the chosen of God, like the 144,000 in the book of Revelation (14:3), the church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23). The Jews consecrated their first fruits to God as his in a special sense. All Christians are meant to be first fruits, the promise and earnest of better work (Rom. 8:23). God has in store great things for his people. The least that we can do is to bring our first and our best, our all, and lay it at the feet of Jesus. The new heaven and the new earth may not come while we live on earth, but we may help heaven to come upon earth by living the life of God.

V

The Practice of the Word of God

Nowhere is James richer than in this wonderful paragraph in verses 19–27 of the first chapter. He has in mind "the word of truth" of verse 18 and follows that idea with pungent and powerful words that remind one of the Sermon on the Mount. It is not clear whether the first part of verse 19 belongs in idea to what goes before or what follows. "Ye know this, my beloved brethren." It makes perfectly good sense either way. It is also uncertain whether we have a statement or a command, for the form may be either indicative or imperative. If you know it, act on your knowledge. Let us listen to what the Word has to say, since we are renewed by the use of it, and be less captious in our criticism of its teachings (Mayor). Moffatt puts it, "Be sure of that, my beloved brothers," and connects it with verse 18.

Brilliant Listening (*1:19*a)

By "swift to hear" James brings a vivid picture before us. Moffatt has it "quick to listen." Sirach (5:11) has a like command: "Be swift in thy listening." One thinks of fleet of foot, yes, and of ear. The Vulgate has *velox* here. The wild animals (and the Indians) of necessity have keen ears and can hear the slightest rustle of a leaf or crackling of a twig. The rabbit,

so often hunted by man and dog, pricks up his ears at the sound of a pin dropping. The use of the telephone and radio have given added importance to the value of the ear. The ancients relied very much on the ear, for the reader of books had a wide-awake audience who depended on the ear rather than the eye for information.

The mechanism of listening is very wonderful, the contact between brain and brain through the sound waves of speech and the reception of the spoken words by the ear. Jesus often said: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The ear with many was, and is, the sole avenue of acquiring knowledge. It is no disparagement of books to say that the art of conversation is one of the greatest refinements. But the very essence of a good conversationalist is that he be also a good listener; else he is a consummate bore. Sydney Smith said of Macaulay that his occasional flashes of silence made his conversation delightful. In *Qoheleth Rabba* we read: "Speech for a shekel, silence for two, it is like a precious stone." Broadus had a great lecture on "The Art of Listening." It is a really rare art and one of the most useful.

Poor listening will make poor preaching of a really good sermon. Good listening will come near to making a good sermon out of a poor one. The writer of Hebrews complains that his readers have become dull of hearing. The word "dull" means no push. They had no push in their ears, no energy in listening, were already half asleep. In particular do we need to listen when God speaks to us in his Word of truth, to have "a quick and attentive ear to catch what God has spoken" (Hort). Inattention is irritating and may be deadly. Sirach says: "The mind of a sagacious person will meditate on a proverb; and an attentive ear is the desire of a wise man" (3:29). God is constantly speaking to those with ears to hear. It is good for the young to learn the habit of attention, a help in meeting temptation.

Eloquent Silence (*1:19*b)

Another life rule of James (Windisch) is "slow to speak." One must not forget Homer's "winged words," for words can be laden with messages of joy and life and peace and love. Eloquence has its place, real eloquence of the soul—words on fire that blaze and burn, words that thrill and electrify, words that make life and death noble and high, words like those of Jesus that are spirit and life (John 6:63). But when all is said, there is something deeper than mere speech, higher than just words, nobler than talk. If speech is silvern, silence is often golden.

Sorrow may be too unutterable for words. Joy may pass beyond all speech. The proverb also has it that "many a man has had to repent of speaking, but never one of holding his peace," unless silence is guilty or cowardly. But it is easy to be voluble with the tongue and slack in life. Sirach says: "Be not violent with thy tongue, and in thy deeds slack and remiss." Volubility is certainly not a sign of power. The silent man, like Moses, is more likely to be a man of power and performance. The parrot and the owl form good examples of the weakness of chatter and the wisdom of silence. Zeno calls attention to the obvious fact that we have two ears and one mouth and should therefore listen twice as much as we talk.

James does not, of course, mean that men should be slow and dull talkers after they begin to talk. He means slow to talk, not slow in talking. Often the least interesting men are the very ones who talk most frequently and at the greatest length. We are to think twice before we speak. Sometimes, if we do that, we shall not speak at all. At any rate, we shall be more likely to have sense in our speech. We shall speak to more purpose if we speak after silence and out of the reflection from silence.

McLaren has a good phrase, "Spread out our souls to the truth." "Be still, and know that I am God." Mary "kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). She could only listen to God. The Quakers have some ground for their plea for meditation in the Christian life. Introspection can, of course, be overdone, but the present age is not given to reflection and contemplation. Practical mysticism is the best type of Christianity. Indeed, Christianity without mysticism is empty and formal.

It is quite possible (Johnstone) that the free conversational style employed in the early Christian meetings was taken advantage of by contentious persons, with the result of serious wranglings, as in the church at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 14). "In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; but he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely" (Prov. 10:19). Such violent talkers break up the spiritual life of a church. The less they know, the more they talk. They have positive opinions on every subject of politics or religion. They know how their neighbors should act in the smallest details and criticize everybody and everything. They are happiest when all is agog with talk of some sort; and the more gossipy it is, the better they like it. "They cannot think, and it is a relief to them to hear their own voices" (Dale). Epictetus (Ench. xxxiii, §5) has the same idea as James: "Let there be silence for the most part or let that which is necessary be said in few words."

Dull Anger (1:19c f.)

The third life rule of James is "slow to wrath." There is a clear connection between speech and anger. Anger inflames one to hasty and unguarded talk. In turn, the words act as fuel to the flames. The talk inflames the anger, and the anger inflames the talk. The more one talks, the angrier he becomes —like a spitfire. If one stops talking, his anger will cool

down for lack of fuel. Men who are dull enough in listening, who will sleep through any sermon, are quick to resent a personal reflection or an imagined wrong. Often one's manhood is gauged by his quickness to avenge a personal affront, with murder as the outcome. This is a fine place to be dull, when one is tempted to be angry.

Anger is sometimes justifiable, even necessary. There is such a thing as righteous indignation against wrong. Jesus "looked round about on them with anger" (Mark 3:5), but it was compassionate anger. It is possible to be angry and sin not (Eph. 4:26), but we must not let the sun go down upon our wrath. Unlike God, we do not know all the circumstances in the case. Getting mad is not promoting the kingdom of God. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." (Compare Matthew 5:21 f.) The euphemistic phrase of James is emphatic by its very mildness. Man's wrath is set over against God's righteousness. The growth of religion and of civilization is marked by the self-restraint of the individual and of the state. Vengeance is a boomerang in most instances. The taking of vengeance into one's own hands brings down the house on one's head. Not only is unhappiness brought to others; immeasurable harm is done in one's own life.

At any rate, it pays every man and every nation to be slow to anger.

> Boys, flying kites, haul in their white-winged birds;
> You can't do that way, when you're flying words.
> Thoughts, unexpressed, may sometimes fall back dead,
> But God himself can't kill them once they're said.

Sometimes unpalatable truth has to be spoken, hard words have to be said. "Am I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). But the preacher needs to temper rebuke with love and anguish of soul.

The Rooted Word (1:21)

"The implanted word" is probably a mistranslation. The common idea of the word is "inborn" or "innate" (cf. Wisd. 12:10, "their wickedness is inborn"). The word is occasionally used for second nature or secondary ingrowth (Hort). The word is sown, not grafted, and so "rooted" seems to be the meaning here (Mayor). See also Romans 6:5, "united with him in the likeness of his death." The figure is that of the seed sown in the heart and taking root and growing there. So Jesus spoke of the man who had no root in himself (Matt. 13:21).

Receive the rooted word; but before doing so, one must cleanse the heart like a garden of all noxious weeds. The imagery is doubtless a mixed metaphor, but never mind that, for the thought is clear. The "putting away" suggests the laying aside of a garment, as in Hebrews 12:1 one strips for the race. In Ephesians 4:21 Paul contrasts putting off the old man with putting on the new (cf. also Col. 3:8 ff.). Mayor notes the comparison between dress and character in the wedding garment (Matt. 22:11), the white robe of purity (Rev. 3:4, 18). In 1 Peter 2:1 we have language similar to that of James, "putting away therefore all wickedness." But probably James means to carry the figure of the garden all through the verse, as Moffatt has it: "So clear away all the foul rank growth," the weeds of "filthiness" and "overflowing of wickedness." The "filthiness" may mean impurity. Compare Paul's phrase "corrupt speech," literally "rotten speech" in Ephesians 4:29. But in Revelation 22:11, "And he that is filthy let him be made filthy still," the notion is more general.

Another noxious weed that must be gotten out of the way is "wickedness," which here may have the narrower sense of malice. "What was called holy anger was nothing better

than spite" (Hort). It is even suggested that the "overflowing" is a sort of overgrowth or excrescence (Hort), but with no idea of admitting that a small amount of wickedness or malice is not evil. The precise figure is an ebullition or effervescence of malice. Surely one too often sees this picture in actual life. Malice bubbles up and runs over into word and deed. "The evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil" (Luke 6:45). He speaks out of the abundance of his heart. Surely evil runs riot unless it is checked and taken out, root and branch. Per contra one loves to think of the abundance of grace (Rom. 5:17, 21) and the abundance of joy (2 Cor. 8:2).

When once the weeds are out of the way, "make a soil of modesty for the Word which roots itself inwardly" (Moffatt). Surely the repentant sinner can only "receive with meekness." Hort notes that the temper full of harshness and pride destroys the faculty of perceiving the voice of God. Jesus urged men to come to school to him, because he is meek and lowly in heart (Matt. 11:29). Meekness is not a virtue that ranks high with all men. Many of the ancients counted it a vice, as Nietzsche has taught in our generation. But the spirit of Nietzsche's superman is not the spirit of Jesus or of the true gentleman. There can be no true culture without gentleness and the grace of meekness.

If the seed of the Word gets root and is allowed to grow (compare the wayside, stony-ground, thorny-ground hearers in Christ's parable in Matt. 13), the tree of life will flourish in the garden of the soul. This word is "able to save your souls." It brings a present salvation here and now (John 5:34), a new life of purity. It helps in the progressive salvation of the whole man in his battle with sin and growth in grace (2 Tim. 3:15). It leads to final salvation in heaven with Christ in God (1 Peter 1:9). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16); the very power of God

pulses in it. See Hebrews 4:12 f. for a wonderful picture of the vital force of the Word of God, quick and powerful, all electric with the energy of the Spirit of God. Men may scoff at and scout the message of God, but it saves men's souls. What else does that?

Hearers Only (1:22–24)

James keeps the balance well. He has shown the wisdom of good listening. Now he proves the futility of mere listening with no effort to put into practice what one hears. There is life in the Word of God if it is lived. It is quick with life-giving energy for those who put it to the test of life. One may hear and not heed. The Greek used the same word for both ideas. One is reminded of the parable of the sower again, for only one of the four classes of hearers brought forth fruit. That is the test. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The reception of the Word will only bring final salvation in case the fruit is borne.

James knew only too well the empty ceremonialism of the Jews who said and did not. Jesus (see Matt. 23) arraigned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in the most scathing denunciation of all time. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." Show yourselves "word-doers" (Hort). By "word" it is not clear whether is meant the Torah (Oesterley) or any word of authority (Hort), or the rooted word just mentioned (Plummer). The latter is most likely, though the partial personification of "word" here reminds one of the opening verses of the Fourth Gospel and of Philo and the Targums.

The "hearers only" did nothing else but listen. They were true "sermon tasters" who fed upon the ministry of the Word or the written word, only to fatten into sloth and spiritual inertia. They got the hookworm disease in religion and belonged to the shirkers, not the workers. Rabbi Chananiah

used to say: "Whosesoever works are in excess of his wisdom, his wisdom stands; and whosesoever wisdom is in excess of his works, his wisdom stands not." [1] The rabbis said there were two crowns, one for doing and one for hearing, based on Exodus 24:7: "we will do, and we will be obedient" ("hear"). The word for hearers appears nowhere else in the New Testament and was used for attendants at the lectures of philosophers and other public speakers rather than learners or disciples. One thinks of the public reading of the Word in the synagogues. But even so, "Act on the Word," Moffatt has it. Else it is like pouring water into a sieve. It is in one ear and out of the other.

Some people have a sort of religious dissipation in attending revival services and imagine that they have accomplished a great deal if they simply go. People easily acquire itching ears that love to be tickled with some sensation. The word takes no root in the hearts of such men. They run from church to church to get a new word, a sort of soda-water habit. They deceive themselves but nobody else. These spiritual "gadabouts" are shallow and skim the surface only. They make a sort of motion picture but accomplish nothing substantial in their own lives or in the work of the kingdom. They are guilty of a logical fallacy and are the victims of their own delusions (cf. Col. 2:4). One has thus a case of autointoxication. He has inoculated himself with the virus of his own error.

And now James draws a wonderfully vivid picture of the idle hearers, the hangers-on in revival meetings, like the scum that comes first to the surface, lighthearted, impulsive, nonchalant, without depth of purpose or seriousness in life. Such a frivolous listener glances at his face in a mirror, taking note to see that he looks natural and proper. A quick look

[1] *Taylor, op. cit.*, p. 63.

suffices for that, for "his natural face," the face of his birth, the only one that he has. If nothing is awry about his appearance reflected in the mirror, he is satisfied (or dissatisfied) with the momentary glance. The mirror was probably of metal, and the word is often used by the poets (Mayor). Here the mirror is the Word of God (spoken or written) by which one takes a look at himself, and the quick and superficial view brings satisfaction or a passing pang. See 1 Corinthians 13:12 for the use of "mirror" for the imperfect knowledge of Christ through reflection in the Word of God and in life contrasted with the blessed reality when face to face with him (Mayor). But here in James the man tarries by the mirror for a moment and soon moves off.

All that he saw in the Word of God is now out of sight and out of mind, like the wayside hearers in Christ's parable. If it was a sermon that he heard, the impulses for good quickly die away. He is back at his business, at his club, or in his home. He straightway forgets what he was like, what sort of man he was in the mirror. In particular, any unpleasant features are forgotten. The momentary trembling of the conscience no longer bothers him. Alas, how easily the burning heat of the day withers the tender shoots in the stony ground; the weeds and thorns choke to death the pious aspirations of the better hours.

Real Students of the Word (1:25)

The image of the mirror is carried on into the picture of the doer of the word, the "doer that worketh," a doer of work, "an active agent" (Moffatt). The phrase is tautological but very emphatic. He is not only a doer of word but a doer of deeds. He has put the word into practice and has brought practical results. He has transmuted word into deed. This is what counts, the practice of the Word of God, not mere glancing at the mirror nor chatter about what one

saw or picked up, not a hearer of forgetfulness. It is astonishing what poor memories men have for what God says. The *Doctrine of Addai* gives as an uncanonical saying of Jesus: "That which we preach before the people by word we should practise by deed in the sight of all."

The sincere listener pauses long enough to become interested in the real meaning of the Word of God, which is now law to him, for he wishes to obey this Word of the Master. These listeners are the joy of the preacher's heart, those who turn to the Scriptures, like the Bereans, to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11). The word in James suggests curiosity and eagerness, as in Sirach 14:23, of the one who looks through the door of wisdom, and in 1 Peter 1:12, the desire of the angels to peer into the problems of the mission of Christ to earth. The law of God is attractive and perfect to the doer of work, as the psalmist has it: "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Psalm 19:7). But it is not a law of compulsion but of freedom. One is free to accept or to reject it. Certainly James does not have the view of the Judaizers, who made the law a yoke of bondage even for Gentiles, but rather that of Paul, who accented the freedom in Christ (Gal. 5:1). Jesus held out freedom as the great blessing of truth (John 8:32)—freedom to exercise one's highest functions and faculties held in bondage by sin and mere legalism.

Perhaps the chief emphasis in this verse lies in the word "continueth." The man remains by the side of the roll of the law spread out before him and unrolls page after page with the keenest interest and zest until he rightly grasps the meaning of God. Thus he puts the Word into practice. He has it stamped on his mind and heart. He is a Christian pragmatist. He, like Brother Lawrence, practices the presence of God. He translates the word of truth into his own life and becomes a living epistle. This is the Bible that the twentieth century loves to read. The man who does this is

"happy in his doing," "blessed in his activity" (Moffatt). He is happy in the doing, even if it falls far short of the ideal in the word of truth. He has tried, and he will keep on trying. He can sing the song of the shirt, the song of the plow, the song of the desk.

Complacent Religiosity (1:26)

Mere listening may be idle. Mere work may be perfunctory. One may be a worker only as well as a hearer only. The hearer only deceives himself by an error of reason (1:22). The worker only deceives his own heart by an error of conduct. He leads himself astray, out of the path, by the delusion that religion consists in the performance of religious duties, not in the attitude toward God in the heart or the ethical conduct. Paul uses the term for Pharisaism (Acts 26:5) and in Colossians 2:18 for the worship of the angels. It is the external aspect of public worship. Originally it had the meaning of reverence for the gods (Hort), but it soon came to be used for the ceremonial rites of worship. In 4 Maccabees 5:6 the word is used for the refusal of the Jews to eat pork.

In a word, it is applied to one who does faithfully the religious chores. The Pharisees form a striking illustration of this emphasis on the ceremonial side of public worship. The regular attendance at the hours of prayer, faithful observance of the rules of ritual purification, payment of the tithes—these things constituted worship. Finally, these *alone* constituted worship. Religion came to consist in the ceremony alone, the letter and not the spirit, the hull and not the kernel.

Most of the things done were good enough. It is good to have the outside of the cup clean but not so important as the inside or as clean water in the cup. Jesus exposed this failing of the Pharisees with great incisiveness and power. It is

easy to mistake form for reality. So men have come to count their beads as prayer, to pray with prayer wheels. A person may attend church regularly, contribute liberally, come to prayer meeting, have family prayers, be a member of the church, and yet not be religious. He may have religiosity and not religion. One may mistake performance of religious functions for the possession of the spirit of religion. In the very act of working out the religious impulse men often fall into traps. So here the man considers that he is a religious man. He is content with his religious status, and yet he does not control his tongue. "He bridleth not his tongue"; this is the earliest known use of this striking figure, though Aristophanes speaks of an unbridled mouth.

The tongue is regarded as an unruly horse that needs bit and bridle held fast by the master to control it. The tongue is allowed to say whatever a spiteful heart prompts. The bitterest words are not felt to be inconsistent with personal piety. Such a man considers himself a pillar of the church in spite of his loose tongue and loose living. He performs religious duties on Sunday and is a shyster on Monday. He deceives himself, but no one else is deceived. Such a man's religious service is empty of any value with God or man. It is vain and hollow mockery. His own complacency makes the matter worse. He is a stumbling block to those who judge religion by him, for he has divorced religion from life.

Unspotted from the World (1:27)

James does not give a definition of religion in this verse but an illustration of the right sort of religious exercise in contrast with the futile religiosity already noted. The absence of the article shows that he does not mean an inclusive description. "A religious exercise pure and undefiled" is here given quite the opposite meaning of the professional performances of the pharisaic pietists. There is pure religion,

and the counterfeit is a tribute to it. This religion is free from pollution. There is in it no alloy of selfishness nor other sin. Moffatt renders it "unsoiled," but it may have the notion of genuine metal.

This standard of purity and piety seems impossible, but God knows how to estimate the relation between listening and doing, between doing and loving, between loving and purity of life. The life must pass muster with God. At first sight one is perhaps depressed by the reflection that God's standard of piety is so much higher than ours. What some men consider holy worship is to God hollow mockery. But then God is our Father. He planted the word of truth in our hearts. He has watched it grow. He knows the limitations of environment in which the tree of life has grown.

James gives two very practical tests of genuine religion. One is mercy toward the suffering. The widow and the orphan appeal to the hardest hearts. And yet men have been known to spend thousands of dollars upon palaces of worship while the poor perished in the alley behind the church. The social side of practical religion is receiving more attention these days than it once did. The very hospitals and asylums are an expression of that love for our common humanity taught by Jesus. James has no sympathy with that cold orthodoxy that is satisfied with singing psalms to Jehovah while the widow and the orphan suffer, with no help from the blind worshipers nearby.

Christianity is inward and spiritual, not mere perfunctory ritual. But it is not mere mystical brooding or abstract contemplation. The cry of the child and the cry of the mother for the child were heard by Jesus. Today the children cry aloud in our streets and in our factories for school and play, for love and sympathy, for better homes and better food, for care of the body and of the soul. Jesus still loves the children. Christ discovered the child. The modern world at last has

begun to find out the child that Jesus has placed in the midst of us. There are many other forms of social service which the true Christian may find right by his door. The neighbor in need may even lie at his gate.

The other test of pure religion offered by James is more distinctly personal and more difficult, though the first test is met none too well. It is "to keep oneself unspotted from the world." Moffatt has it "from the stain of the world." It is a high calling surely if one is to walk in a world like this free from the stain of sin, with no spot upon garments, body, or soul. The Lamb of God was offered as a sacrifice without spot. Christ will present his church at last without spot. James had just spoken of the use of the tongue. That also can leave a spot or stain (cf. 3:6).

There is much dirt of all kinds about us. The germs of sin infest and infect us all. And yet it is not hopeless to make a fight for purity in life. We do not give up the battle for cleanliness of body, for healthfulness of body, for victory over the germs of disease about us and in us. It is worthwhile to lead the clean, white life of purity. One has his reward in his own life—in fresh power, in new joy, in richer fruitage. He has his reward also in the inspiration given to others, who are cheered to strive likewise against sin, to fight for personal and social purity, for better homes and better cities, for a better world in which to serve God, for a bit of heaven here on earth, for the reign of God in human hearts, for likeness to Jesus the Son of God.

VI
Class Prejudice

In the second chapter James recurs to the discussion of the democracy of faith found in 1:9–11. In fact, it had never been very far in the background. The use of "my brethren" is eminently appropriate here, since he is urging the readers to brotherly kindness (Mayor).

Face Value in Religion (2:1)

This is a very hard verse to translate at once, for we must decide three disputed questions. One is whether the verb is imperative or interrogative. It is taken as imperative in most versions, and so most interpreters hold, but Hort urges that it is a tame conception compared with the indignant query expecting the answer no. There is force in this point, as thus James would be expressing vehement surprise that such partiality could exist among the Jewish Christians. Still, the prohibition against such partiality makes good sense.

There is little doubt that "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" should be rendered "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." It is objective, not subjective, genitive. For a similar use of the objective genitive with faith one may note Mark 11:22 and Acts 3:16. It is not the faith of Jesus that is under discussion but the faith of the readers in Jesus Christ our Lord. This interpretation commits James to the worship of Jesus as Lord and Messiah, but that is surely what would be ex-

pected in one who claimed to be a "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1). It is true that the standpoint of James is nearer to that of the Old Testament than is true of Peter, John, and Paul, but after the great Pentecost there seems to be no wavering on the great fundamentals of Christianity, though there is rich development and enlargement.

The essence of the Christology of James is precisely that of Paul, though James does not amplify his implications as Paul does. James, though very Jewish in background, is thoroughly Christian. The heart of Christianity, the worship of Jesus as Lord and Saviour, is here, though chronologically the Epistle of James precedes the teaching of Paul and John in their writings. It is like the child and the man (Plummer), not a retrograde movement. It is the outlook of Jerusalem, not that of Antioch. What James is discussing is not the personal religion of Jesus but the reader's faith in Jesus.

The third disputed point in the verse is the word "glory." The English versions generally insert the words "the Lord" and make it "the Lord of glory," but Bengel makes "the glory" *ipse Christus*. In this he is followed by Mayor, Hort, and Oesterley; and it is almost certainly true that by "glory" James has in mind the Shekinah. In the Septuagint for Leviticus 26:11 the word for Shekinah is just that used in Revelation 21:3: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." In John 1:14 we read: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father)." Add to this Hebrews 1:3, "who, being the effulgence of his glory," and the case seems made out. In *Pirke Aboth* iii. 3 we note: "Two that sit together and are occupied in words of Thorah have the Shekinah among them."

Jesus claimed, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

Jesus is thus not only the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Resurrection but also the Glory. James may have in mind the resurrection glory of Jesus as he appeared to him. In Luke 2:32 Simeon says: "The glory of thy people Israel."

But all this is by way of emphasis for the main point. One who has faith in such a Lord as Jesus should not be guilty of "acts of partiality" (Hort). The meaning of the phrase is clear, though the origin is obscure.[1] The Greek use of the word for mask is illustrated by the word for hypocrite. In Leviticus 19:15 we see the full force of the idiom: "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty." See Acts 10:34, where Peter learns that God is no respecter of persons.

God does not accept the outside appearance for the inner reality—nor should we. God is the God of reality. (Compare Heb. 4:12 f.) A just judge must not be influenced by the bias of personal preference, prejudice, rank, power, money (Mayor). He must decide the case on its merits. There is no room for class prejudice or for the caste system in Christianity, as there is none in the heart of God. Christianity is democratic to the core, that is, real Christianity. Organized Christianity has sometimes been the very thing that James here condemns. Even in the single church little rifts and cliques easily develop.

Partiality in Church (2:2–4)

Already the Jewish Christians were in peril from this evil. It is, in particular, a sin of ushers who show respect of persons

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[1] The Hebrew (Psalm 82:2) originally had the idea of lifting the face with a view to comfort. Partiality was a subordinate development. Cf. H. St. John Thackeray, *Grammar of the Old Testament Greek According to the Septuagint* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), pp. 43 ff. The Greek idiom has only the bad meaning and comes from taking off the mask. See Luke 20:21; Gal. 2:3 f. for the full idiom.

in seating strangers. But pastors are in constant danger of the same sin in general church relations. The word here for synagogue may mean place of worship or the assembly itself, as in Hebrews 10:25, "the assembling of yourselves together." The word for church does not occur in the apostolic period (Hort) for place of meeting, but synagogue was already in common use in both senses. But it is not necessary to suppose that James has in mind simply a Jewish synagogue, though it is quite possible that the Jewish Christians still attended worship and heard Moses read in the synagogue (Acts 15:21), as Christians belonged to the synagogue of the Libertines (Acts 6:9) and the early Christians worshiped still in the Temple.

The use of "your" seems to mean that it is at least a Christian gathering that James refers to, whether meeting in the Jewish synagogue or elsewhere. "The growth of the Gentile element in the church excited the active hostility of the Jews against the whole body of Christians, as it troubled the Jewish converts themselves" (Westcott on Hebrews, p. xxxviii). Finally the Christians had to set up for themselves, as in Corinth (Acts 18:7) and in Ephesus (Acts 19:8 f.). We do not know the precise stage reached by the Jewish Christians here. James may mean some particular instance of trouble in the dispersion that came to his notice, or he may have in mind any Christian gathering in the dispersion. The Gentiles often attended the worship of the Jews in the synagogues (Acts 13:16, 43). The use of "synagogue" for Christian worship occurs rarely, as in Hermas, *Mand.* xi. 9. The time came when synagogue was used only for Jews or heretics. Epiphanius (*Haer.* xxx. 18) says that the Ebionites call their meeting "synagogue," not "church." One may note also John's use of the term "synagogue of Satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

The picture of the two strangers at church is drawn with bold lines and in few words by James; yet it is remarkably

clear and picturesque. The man with a gold ring probably makes a display of his ring. If he preached, he would make most of his gestures with that hand. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Mayor quotes Epictetus (*Diss.* 1. 22) as speaking of an "old man with gold fingers." The "fine clothing" is literally "brilliant clothing," "new glossy clothes" (Hort), "the fine white garment worn by wealthy Jews" (Oesterley), like that in which Herod Antipas clad Jesus when he sent him back to Pilate. One can easily see the distinguished-looking stranger as he steps in at the same time as "a poor man in vile clothing," "in dirty clothes" (Moffatt), "old shabby clothes" (Hort). See Revelation 22:11 for the same adjective for "filthy." In James 1:21 we had "filthiness."

We have no means of knowing whether these two men who suddenly enter church are Christians or simply Jews. Both seem to be strangers. The courtesies extended are based purely on the appearance of these two as to dress, not on race or ecclesiastical standing.

The poor man may be one reduced to beggary—a tramp or hobo. He may be a poor working man. He stands in marked contrast with the rich man, as in 1:9–11. Probably the poor man had on the best clothes that he had. Should a man like that come to our churches? Would he be welcome in our pews? To be sure, cases occur when a bath would help matters and when plain, but clean, clothes could be provided by Christian people so as to make attendance at church free from embarrassment. But there are people, especially children, who stay away from both Sunday school and church because they do not possess decent clothes in which to come. They fear the critical eyes and comments of the people at church.

It is easy to say that people should rise above such unfavorable circumstances and come on to church to worship

God, who reads the heart and does not judge men by their clothes. Yes, but a man may conclude that he can worship God just as acceptably and more comfortably in some other church where the usher does not seem so ashamed of his coming or embarrassed by his presence that, in spite of plenty of empty pews in the grand temple of worship, he finds a back seat for him under the gallery or in the gallery on a footstool (literally, "under my footstool," probably "on the floor by my footstool"), in a corner, or a place to stand against the wall. Meanwhile, the poor man has seen the attentions paid the man in fine clothes; he is ushered to a good seat with the air of a prince.

The soul of the poor man is all the more embittered, since he came perhaps in a sort of desperation from the hardness of the world outside, a world that has economic and social laws that make the battle a difficult one. And now in the temple of God the worshipers of Jesus show the same pride of wealth and station as at a social function. The preacher talks of forgiveness of sins and the comfort of the Holy Spirit; but he and the ushers keep a sharp eye upon the man who wears the fine clothes, pompous and self-conscious as that man probably feels. The soul of the poor man is made more bitter still as he leaves the church of the rich and the proud to see if he can find God at home or the devil in the saloon or other den of iniquity.

One pity of it all is that so many churches have fine, empty, cushioned seats, while the strangers who could fill them are not sought for or not properly welcomed if they come. It is a pathetic picture that James here gives us—that of the stranger at the door of the church. Most strangers pass the door of the church by with indifference or disgust. The church must win the strangers outside unless it is to degenerate into a social club of a few select families. A church that only holds its own will soon lose that standing.

The task of the church is to win the world to Christ. And then when the poor of earth enter, it is worse than folly to push them to one side and out of doors, back into the street.

This touch of life is one of many modern notes in the Epistle of James. The embarrassment of the usher in the presence of two such incongruous strangers at once is probably due to the fact that he knows full well the atmosphere or tone of the church. It is aristocratic or select; evangelical and orthodox, not evangelistic or missionary; a haven of rest for the stately pious, not a rescue station for the lost. The officers of the church thus make distinctions between the attendants at church and sort out the congregation according to worldly standards. They are "judges of evil thoughts" and act with partiality in bestowing courtesies on strangers in the house of God. All this is in such marked contrast to the spirit and conduct of Jesus that one can hardly credit his eyes when he sees it happen in church. It is increasingly difficult to get the poor to come to some of the churches. The churches themselves may sometimes become suspicious that the very poor come to church to receive financial help. So the breach widens.

Prejudice Against the Poor (2:5–7)

James now has fewer maxims and a more argumentative style, like that of Paul. He makes a passionate appeal for attention: "Hearken, my beloved brethren." He writes as an impassioned speaker speaks (cf. 1:16; 4:13). God's choice of the people of Israel seems to be in the background (Deut. 14:1 f.). The Jews had come in many cases to look on earthly prosperity as a mark of divine favor and poverty as a sign of God's disfavor (cf. Psalm 73).

The Pharisees were lovers of money (Luke 16:14). But the troubles of the Jews, in spite of many wealthy Pharisees and Sadducees, had led many of them to see a blessing in poverty.

See Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Gad. vii. 6: "For the poor man, if, free from envy, he pleaseth the Lord in all things, is blessed beyond all men." Oesterley (*in loco*) quotes *Chag.* 9*b* as saying that poverty is the quality that above all befits Israel as the Chosen People. Epictetus (bk. IV, chap. i, 43) says: "Another (thinks the cause of his evils to be) that he is poor." Epictetus (Stob. 10) says further: "Riches are not among the things that are good." Luke 6:20 has: "Blessed are ye poor," where Matthew 5:3 has "poor in spirit."

It is certain that the gospel made a powerful appeal to the poorer classes of society among Jews and Gentiles. Jesus claimed it as part of his messianic mission "to preach good tidings to the poor" (Luke 4:18), as Isaiah (60:1 f.) had foretold. He asked the messengers of John the Baptist to take back to Macherus the news that "the poor have the good tidings preached to them" (Luke 7:22) as one proof of his messiahship. Paul enlarges on the choice (1 Cor. 1:27 f.) by God of the foolish, the weak, the despised classes to add to his own glory. The early churches were gathered largely from the proletariat. Slaves and masters, rich and poor, mingled together in fellowship and brotherly love.

The papyri discoveries have shown us the world of Jesus and of Paul "in the workaday clothes of their calling." [2] Deissmann adds: "We should be sorry indeed not to have been told that Jesus came from an artisan's home in country surroundings." [3] The fact that Jesus was a carpenter, a workingman in the modern sense of that term, should enlist the sympathy and the interest of all workingmen. They should heed the call of the Carpenter.

Here James boldly champions the cause of the poor as against certain rich Jews, probably not members of the

[2] Deissmann, *St. Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History, loc. cit.*, p. 47.
[3] *Ibid.*

church, who have oppressed the Christians and dragged them before courts of justice. With their own hand these rich Jews had dragged Christians before tribunals. Rich Sadducees had done this with Peter and John (Acts 4:1). As one of these potentates, yea, as a tyrant, Paul had once dragged men and women before the Sanhedrin (Acts 8:3; 22:4). He had even tried to make them blaspheme (Acts 26:11). It was not necessary to have special laws against the Christians. As objects of dislike it was easy enough, as Paul found out, to hale them into court. Paul came to know only too well how the tables could be turned on him when he became a Christian. He had to take his own medicine (Acts 13:50; 16:19). Jesus indeed had foretold that just this fate would befall his disciples before the courts of Jews and Gentiles (Matt. 10:17 f.; John 16:2).

The anger of these rich Jews against Jesus and Christians leads them actually to blaspheme the name of Christ. The Sadducees will not even call the name of Jesus when they discuss the case of Peter and John. They refer with contempt to "this name" (Acts 4:17), though in the threat they have to name Jesus (v. 18). The disciples rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name" (Acts 5:41). So "the honorable name," "the beautiful name," "the noble Name" (Moffatt) came to be the shibboleth of the believers in Jesus. His name was to be "the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9 f.). It was already the only name with power to save (Acts 4:12), as Peter boldly informed the Sanhedrin. That was the meaning of the name Jesus (Matt. 1:21).

Here one sees afresh the Christology of James. The honorable name is the name of Jesus, with a possible reference to the use of it in the baptismal formula—"by which ye are called," "which is called upon you." At any rate, they bear the name of Christian, given probably as a reproach (Acts

11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:14, 16). This name is now their badge of honor and glory. When called upon to say, "Anathema be Jesus," they reply, "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor. 12:3). Certainly the early Jewish Christians had everything to make them fear the powerful rich who had frowned upon Jesus and his cause.

And yet James dares to say to the Jewish Christians: "But ye have dishonored the poor man," "now you insult the poor" (Moffatt). They had done it out of cringing fear of the rich Jews with all their power, or out of anxiety to please the rich so as to win them with fawning flattery. We are not to think that all the Jewish Christians had shown such narrowness or such cowardice, but some instances had come to the notice of James. Per contra note the case of Ananias and Sapphira, who wished to gain credit for great liberality to the poor by the use of part of the wealth, keeping back half though pretending to give all. All the early Christians were not poor. The cases of Barnabas, Joseph of Arimathea, and Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary occur to one at once. Jesus did not denounce rich men per se, though he did point out with great power the peril of wealth.

James is not to be understood as denouncing the rich in a wholesale fashion. Consecration is what sanctifies riches—the use of money for the glory of God and the blessing of mankind. A man is not a child of the devil just because he is rich or poor. God deals with men in the raw manhood. "A man's a man for a' that." The distinction between the upper and the lower classes is partly fictitious and is not a stable condition. The slums are a dreadful fact and a disgrace to modern civilization. People should have decent homes, good food, fresh air, and clean clothes. Extreme poverty is a peril to a man's soul, as is great wealth. It is not a sin to be rich, but dangerous, though most of us are willing to take the risk. Epictetus (Stob. 10) says: "It is difficult for a rich person to

be right-minded or a right-minded person rich." Riches and poverty are not essential criteria of character. Over against the slums in our cities one may place the pious poor of Scotland, as seen in "The Cotter's Saturday Night." Over against the wild and reckless *nouveaux riches* one may note the generous givers of millions to missions and to education.

One must learn to be just to all classes and to do justice to all. A person needs full knowledge of the social conditions about him and the courage to apply the gospel of Christ to these conditions. But let no one imagine that sociology can take the place of the gospel of Jesus. Christianity is sociological, but sociology is not necessarily Christian. We need intelligent sympathy, but most of all we need the love and grace of God in the heart. But minister and man must be independent of bondage to either rich or poor and stand in the freedom of Christ.

Prof. H. C. Vedder makes a very serious charge against modern ministers: "This attitude of the clergy can be explained only on the ground of their economic dependence upon the privileged classes. They are the hirelings of capitalism, and, to do them justice, they earn their wages." [4] This is a bitter attack upon the ministry for always championing the cause of capital whenever labor and capital clash. The charge is not always true, as anyone who observes should know. Organized labor is sometimes in the wrong. Corporations that are unjust to labor are often denounced in the pulpit. Let every case be met on its merits. Certainly the minister of Christ should be on the side of manhood against mere money. A man's life is more than money.

James reminds his readers that God is not ashamed of the poor. In fact, he often calls the poor, as the world regards

[4] *The Gospel of Jesus and the Problems of Democracy* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1914), p. 46.

them, to be rich in faith. After all, the riches of the spirit and of fellowship with God are the true riches. So often a turn in the wheel of life leaves a man poor today who was rich yesterday. And death will separate one from all his wealth, save what he has given away. The wicked rich man may scout the poor saint here, but Lazarus will rest in Abraham's bosom while the wicked rich man is in torment in hades.

But even here the pious poor stand high with God, while the wicked rich are despised. The poor may be heirs of the kingdom. Think of that—heirs of the kingdom of God, the glorious messianic kingdom promised of old and now begun, the fulness of which is in the future with God, the heavenly kingdom. But even here and now the poor saint is a child of the King and has riches untold. He has love and joy in his heart, a superiority to adversity, an elevation of spirit, the peace of God that passes all understanding; and that is worth more than all the gold of Ophir.

It is not mere pious platitude on the part of James when he writes thus. He is but interpreting the soul of mystic Christianity, real Christianity, as set forth by Jesus in the Beatitudes, where those only are felicitated who have the joy of the spirit independent of outward condition or circumstance. After all, the piety of the poor is a nation's best asset. The poor will someday, many of them, be rich. May they still be pious! The upper classes run down and run out, alas, and have to be recruited constantly from the lower classes. It is the law of life. If we save the masses, we may save the classes. At any rate, it is a pitiful business to see a church of Jesus Christ ashamed of the poor, as the world regards them, for Jesus our Lord was himself poor for our sakes, voluntarily poor. "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9)—rich in God's mercy and grace, rich in character, in likeness to Jesus.

The Royal Law (2:8 f.)

The poise of James appears again. He has no wish to stir the passions and prejudices of the poor against the rich. Surely it is not a sin to love rich people. They are entitled to the same love as other people, many far more because of the noble use made of their wealth. If you really fulfil the royal law—a law fit for kings or such as a king will be sure to follow (cf. Psalm 72; Zech. 9:9) and supreme over other laws (Matt. 22:40)—you do well. We should love both rich and poor alike. This royal law was in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18) and is here quoted. It was sanctioned by Jesus (Matt. 19:18 f.) as one of the two chief commandments on which hang the whole law and the prophets (Matt. 22:38–40). Love of God and man covers all else. One may compare also the Golden Rule as given by Jesus in Matthew 7:12, which is just another way of stating the royal law of loving one's neighbor (one near in need, whether in proximity or not) as oneself, a very high standard for most people.

The royal law forbids the partiality in church of which James has been speaking, this respect of persons. It is more than an error of judgment or a breach of etiquette. It is an act of sin, a slip in ethics, a missing of the mark that is fraught with grave consequences. It is bad enough to be convicted by the law as transgressors by this servile regard for the rich. It is worse to note the evil effect on the church and the community. A church of a clique is doomed. A church is only of use when it is open to the people who need the help of the gospel. The church opens its doors to let people in, does not put up bars to keep them out.

Stumbling in One Point (2:10 f.)

At first blush it seems that James has Draconian severity in these verses, but it is not the severe punishment of small

crimes or venial offenses. The long list of capital crimes in ancient England shows how slowly men have learned to temper justice with mercy. Some of the Stoics said that the theft of a penny was as bad as parricide. The "blue laws" of Connecticut come to mind also. James does not say that all sins are equal, that one sin is as bad as another. As a matter of fact, each man discounts his own sins. The rake looks with scorn on the grafter. The man guilty of spiritual pride scouts the drunkard. It is a hard task to convince a man that he is guilty of his own sin.

The burden of the law was very heavy. The curse of the law (Gal. 3:13) was more than violation of particular precepts, though that was true to the last detail (Deut. 11:26, 28, 32; 27:26), as Jesus explained (Matt. 5:18 f.). The Jewish fathers put a hedge or fence about the law (*Pirke Aboth* i. 1) and made it very difficult to keep all of it (the law as a whole, hard enough as it was), plus the traditions of the elders, which often contradicted and set at naught the commandment of God (Mark 7:8 f.). Compare Sirach 27:12. Rabbi Hunnah, in a midrash on Numbers 5:14, taught that he who committed adultery broke all commandments, and some of the rabbis placed the sabbath above all else and held that if one profaned it, he had broken all the commandments. Mayor, per contra, quotes some of the rabbis as saying that to keep the law about fringes and phylacteries was to keep the whole law. There was a constant tendency to make the ceremonial cover up moral and spiritual lapses.

Augustine (Epistle to Jerome, 167) compares this teaching of James with the Stoic doctrine of the solidarity of virtues and vices as mentioned. But certainly James has a higher view than these hair-splitting punctilios. Paul saw that the essence of sin lies in the motive (Rom. 14:23) and that desire to glorify God should pervade all our acts (1 Cor. 10:31). It seems hard to hold someone who makes one slip to

strict account and hold him guilty of all. That is true only in the sense that James proceeds to explain that any violation of law makes one a lawbreaker.[5]

One does not have to break all the laws to become a lawbreaker. One offense places him in that category. The matter is put with this sharp emphasis because of the complacent self-satisfaction of the perfunctory ceremonialist (James 1:26), who may yet commit the sin of partiality in church. James is seeking to convict such "pious" sinners of their guilt, to rouse them out of their smug self-satisfaction.

It is quite possible that those who were guilty of spiritual pride and other sins of the spirit boasted of their freedom from adultery and murder (Hort). At any rate, we must not forget that out of the heart are the issues of life, that murder springs out of hate and that all of God's laws come from the same will (Mayor). It is disobedience to the will of God that constitutes the essence of sin. It is not a light matter to be guilty of any sin. Our only hope is in the grace and forgiveness of God. There is no room for pride on the part of sinners, setting up one sin against another sin.

A Law of Liberty (2:12 f.)

But James is not a pharisaic legalist nor a Judaizer. He adds these verses to make it plain that he does not have in mind the painful observance of separate rules and details. The spirit is greater than the letter. Our words and deeds are to be judged by "a law of liberty" (cf. 1:25), not of bondage. We are under grace, not the old law. We live in an atmosphere of love and liberty, not of repression and slavery. God

[5] Codex D adds to Luke 6:4: "On the same day seeing a certain man working on the Sabbath, he said to him, 'Man, if you know what you are doing you are blessed; if you do not know you are accursed and a transgressor of the law.'" But this logion does not compare sabbath-breaking with other sins, though it does emphasize insight into the motive of the act.

watches the real motive in our conduct toward the rich and the poor as in all things. "Mercy glorieth against judgment"; mercy triumphs over judgment. God shows mercy to us in spite of our shortcomings, for Jesus is the pledge of our fidelity and our hope.

We make so many mistakes that we should have no heart to go on if we had to be held to strict account every time we stumbled in one point. Still, we must not overlook the fact that we did stumble. It is our duty not to stumble at that point again. So we go on our stumbling way toward that goal of perfection which is ever before us. It was Jesus who said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). James seems to know this saying, as he lays emphasis on the spirit and motive in holy living.

VII

The Appeal to Life

We now come to the famous passage that is supposed by some scholars to be an attack on Paul's doctrine of salvation by faith instead of works. James is interpreted by many to be a champion of works as against Paul's theory of grace. It is an old controversy and is the occasion of Martin Luther's slighting allusion to the Epistle of James as "a veritable epistle of straw." He thought it contradicted the Epistle of Galatians, which he loved dearly as his "wife." It is necessary, therefore, to clear the atmosphere a bit before proceeding to the exposition.

The Standpoint of James

This depends on the date of the epistle. (For the discussion of this question, see chapter I.) It is here assumed that James wrote before the Jerusalem Conference, before A.D. 50.

Paul wrote Galatians and Romans, as well as 1 and 2 Corinthians, in the heat of the Judaizing controversy, to answer the contention that circumcision was essential to the salvation of the Gentiles, that Christianity alone was not sufficient but must be supplemented by Judaism. No issue ever stirred Paul's nature like this. It is possible that Paul may have had in mind a misuse of James 2:14–26 by the Judaizers when he wrote, knowing that James in reality agreed with him in the matter (Acts 15:14–21; Gal. 2:1–10). But James clearly is not attacking Paul or Paul's theory of grace. He rather has in

view a perversion of the Christian emphasis on the spiritual side as opposed to the ceremonial ritualism of the Pharisees.

The pendulum swings from one extreme to the other. The Jews had laid too much emphasis on religious duties (cf. James 1:26), and some of the Christians went to the extreme of thinking that no works at all were needed in the Christian life. Some of the Jews, on the other hand, had already gone so far as to consider creed alone essential. "As soon as a man has mastered the thirteen heads of the faith, firmly believing therein . . . though he may have sinned in every possible way . . . still he inherits eternal life." [1] This Jewish unconcern for real piety in life is reflected in the lives of some of the Jewish Christians and is the occasion of the remarks of James.

James's use of righteousness or justification is in the sense of actual goodness as Jesus uses it in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:1) and of sanctification as Paul has it in Romans 6 to 8. It is not the "imputed righteousness" of Paul in Romans 3 and 4. James has a practical purpose, not a theological one. He is not discussing the question as to how Abraham was set right with God, how faith was reckoned as righteousness, the point seized on by Paul in the verse. James quotes the whole verse (Gen. 15:6), as Paul does, but he is concerned with it as proof that when put to the test, Abraham lived up to his faith in that he actually "offered up Isaac his son upon the altar" (James 2:21). It is the deed as proof of faith that James emphasizes, though both points are in the narrative.

James looks upon works as proof of faith, not as means of salvation. John the Baptist had demanded "fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). Jesus had said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). Paul will discuss death to sin

[1] Maim. on Mishnah, Sanhedrin xi. 1.

on the part of the believer (Rom. 6:1–11). Peter will show how the life will make the calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). The whole Epistle to the Hebrews is a clarion call to hold fast the confession of faith to the end. John will insist that those who say they are in the light do not walk in darkness (1 John 1:6; 2:9). Certainly then, James is in harmony with the full drift of the gospel message in his insistence on works as proof of the new life.

Paul, in his contrast between faith and works, has in mind the Jewish doctrine of works as means of salvation. See 2 Esdras 9:7 f.: "Whoever shall be able to escape either by his works or by his faith shall see my salvation." And even here "by faith" does not mean what Paul has in mind, saving trust, but rather creed. The Pharisees taught the value of works of supererogation, the "merit" of the fathers, in particular, the merit of Abraham, whose faith and works were a storehouse for the Jews. "We have Abraham to our father." That was enough. So the Roman Catholics hold that the saints may help us out of purgatory if we pay enough for their intercession. Prayer itself becomes an *opus operatum,* a credit in the balance sheet with God. Most Jews held works alone to be the means of salvation. The point was keenly discussed in the Jewish schools in Jerusalem and Alexandria.

As to faith, in this passage he is thinking of mere intellectual assent to the unity of God or other theological tenets. This was the use of "faith" by many of the Jews. After some of them became Christians, they got no further. It is this idle and empty faith that James is condemning. James does have the other sense of trust for the word, as in 2:1, "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," the sense in which Paul uses the term when he contrasts it with works (Rom. 3:20–30). It is quite important to note this distinction.

The antithesis in James is not, in reality, between faith and works but between live faith and dead faith, the two uses of

the term just mentioned. In verse 18 the point is made absolutely clear. It is not personal trust in Christ that James ridicules but an empty theological tenet that does not stand the test of actual life. So then, James and Paul go off at tangents when the same words occur, for they are talking about different things.

Not Pious Pretense (*2:14–17*)

Once more James corrects a possible misapprehension. He properly places mercy above justice, but no one need think for a moment that good deeds do not matter. God is full of mercy, but there is a limit even with God. He demands some performance, not mere profession. "What doth it profit?" James pointedly asks. *Cui bono?* What is the use? What good is it for a man to say he has faith who has no works to prove his faith? How can men know that he has any faith? The mere assertion is all that men have at first. In the beginning the claim to faith is accepted, but the life must confirm the claim if men are to continue to believe it. God can read the heart, but even God demands that the life show the change of heart. The life must give expression to what the heart has felt.

James asks again: "Can that faith [2] save him?" He does not scoff at faith but at such hollow "faith" as this. James here speaks for the practical man of the present day who wishes to see some real difference in the life of a man who becomes a Christian. It is an old demand, as we see in 1 John 1 and 2. There is no escape from this appeal to life, nor ought there to be. Men are judged by their conduct in business during the week as much as by their attendance at church on Sunday. James does not say that a Christian has no faults and

[2] The article here has almost the original demonstrative force. James means the kind of faith that rests on mere assertion without works to prove it.

never sins or is a hypocrite if he sins once. He does say that he should have some faith.

His illustration in verses 15 and 16 is very forcible and shows that he was probably a striking and popular preacher (Oesterley). It is a problem that is constantly presented to our modern Christians and churches. A brother or sister is in need of food and clothing. They are out of work because of the economic conditions beyond their control. They are not professional beggars. One may pause to admit the serious difficulty of knowing how to render real assistance to those who come to our doors for help. The modern social workers tell us not to give money and clothing but to investigate the case or to have the charity organization or some of the rescue workers to do it for us. The great number of tramps and professional beggars with false stories tends to harden our hearts to the many cases of real need all about us. Some of these are too proud to make their real condition known and actually starve to death or perish from disease and cold.

James here assumes that the case is one of real need that deserves sympathy and help. The man who prides himself upon the correctness of his professional creed and pious standing bestows kind words of sympathy and nothing else, sending the suffering brother or sister, "ill-clad and short of daily food" (Moffatt), out into the bitter cold and shutting the door with a sense of satisfaction after such pious platitudes as, "Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled." He calls his cheap words Christian sympathy. It is enough to make demons laugh. The irony of James is keen. "The things needful to the body," the ordinary necessities of life, now become rare luxuries to the poor brother or sister. So James repeats his query: "What doth it profit?"

It is pertinent per contra to quote Paul on the necessity of love even in beneficence: "And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have

not love, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). What, indeed! One recalls the compassion of Jesus for the hungry multitudes whom he fed. His heart was not hardened. He did not ask them to be satisfied with honeyed words and the aroma of dinner. The pious pretenders actually think that the needy should be grateful for kind advice when sent away without a mouthful to eat. James applies his illustration to the point discussed (v. 17). Mere professional faith that talks and does not "is dead in itself." There is no life in it, no reality. It is dead on the inside and is a mere empty shell of pious pretense. There are people who today turn to our churches for help in the hour of need and get only empty words. It will be in vain then to speak about the grace of God.

Not Mere Intellectual Assent (2:18–19)

It is extremely difficult to follow the thought of James in verse 18. He is usually wonderfully perspicuous, but here we are in doubt as to the punctuation and the reference in "a man." Some scholars think that it is a delicate way that James has of referring to himself, but then James is emphasizing works, not mere faith.

Is the sentence a question or an assertion? Shall we say "but" or "yea"? Hort has shown a way out that is partly followed by Moffatt. Take the "man" as an objector, but let his objection cover only the first sentence, the point being to challenge the faith of James, since he has put such accent on works. "Thou, James, hast thou faith? I also (as well as thou) have works." The objector thus claims to have both faith and works but implies that James has only works and no faith.

The rest of the verse is then the reply of James to the objector.[3] James bursts in with the answer to the challenge

[3] One may compare Paul's habit of answering an imaginary objector in the development of his argument. See Romans 2:1; 9:20.

and rests his claim to faith on works as proof. "Show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith." Here James pits over against each other the two sorts of faith—the true faith which James claims to possess and which is proved by works and the false faith which is mere profession and entirely apart from works. The antithesis is complete. The dispute turns on how one knows that he has faith. James rests his case on his works and in turn challenges the objector to prove his faith apart from works.

Now James is ready to drive the point home. He proceeds to show that such an empty faith as his objector has is mere intellectual assent to propositions and is not saving trust that bears fruit in the life. "Thou believest that God is one." This is one of the statements of the unity of God. The usual formula occurs in Deuteronomy 6:4 and in Mark 12:29 ("The Lord our God, the Lord is one"). The recitation of this phrase was not merely the orthodox creed but was supposed to have saving efficacy (cf. the Moslem repetition of "Allah"). From the time of the exile the repetition of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4 ff.) each morning and evening was the duty of every pious Israelite. "Whoever reads the *Shema* upon his couch is as one that defends himself with a two-edged sword" (Meg. 3*a*). "They cool the flames of Gehinnom for him who reads the *Shema*" (Ber. 15*b*). Oesterley (*in loco*) adds that "the very parchment on which the *Shema* is written is efficacious in keeping demons at a distance."

These statements will help us to understand the atmosphere from which James draws his illustration. And yet James does not ridicule this mental assent to the oneness of God. "Thou doest well." Orthodoxy is better than heresy. Orthodoxy is "thinking straight," and that is what we all need to do. Every man is right in his own eyes, and the rest are a bit "off." But good as monotheism is, it is not enough (cf. Mohammedanism again).

What James criticizes is mere intellectual assent with no vital union with God. "The demons also believe," as well as you. The demons know only too well that God is and that he is one. They are monotheists, not polytheists. They recognized Jesus: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24). Compare Matthew 8:29 and Luke 4:41. The demons are thoroughly orthodox on this point, have intellectual assent ("faith"), but they are still demons. They even shudder at the fact and the power of God as they feared Jesus (Mark 1:24; Luke 8:29). The word means to "bristle," like the Latin *horreo,* with the hair standing on end. "Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up" (Job 4:15). So Daniel (7:15) says, "My spirit was grieved." The argument is as complete as it can be.

The Obedient Trust of Abraham (2:20–24)

But James applies his illustration again. He hammers the objector while he has him. "But wilt thou know, O vain man?" ("you senseless fellow," Moffatt). The word is used like the Latin *vanus* of boasters or impostors, men whose word cannot be depended upon. You can know, if you wish to know,[4] "that faith apart from works is barren," "faith without deeds is dead" (Moffatt), according to some manuscripts. One may note 2 Peter 1:8, "not idle nor unfruitful." Faith without works is like a barren woman, without children to comfort her. "Children" and "works" are sometimes used as parallel. "Wisdom is justified by her works" (Matt. 11:19); "wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:35).

James thus shows irritation at the dulness of his objector,

[4] Aorist tense and so punctiliar—know once for all—with almost a touch of impatience in the tense.

but he hopes to make even such a man see the point by appealing to the axiomatic case of Abraham. The faith of Abraham was one of the commonplaces of theological discussion in the rabbinical schools (Oesterley). See Sirach 44:20 ff.; Wisdom 10:5. It is no wonder that Paul (Rom. 4; Gal. 3:7) makes use of the case of Abraham. He considers it so important that in Romans he devotes a whole chapter to the subject. Paul lays chief emphasis (Rom. 4:17–21) on Abraham's faith in the promise of a son. Paul also proves that Abraham had the justifying faith before he was circumcised. James shows that Abraham lived up to his faith when put to the test. Both points are true.

There was abuse of the faith of Abraham. Thus Rabbi Nehemiah (*Mechilta* on Ex. 14:31) says: "So Abraham, solely for the merit of his faith, whereby he believed in the Lord, inherited this world and the other." The Jews came to rely so much on the "merit" of Abraham's faith that they felt that all they had to do was to say, "We have Abraham to our father" (Matt. 3:9). They leaned [5] on "Father Abraham." In 1 Maccabees 2:52 the same use is made of the case of Abraham that we have in James: "Was not Abraham found faithful in trial, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness?" In Hebrews 11 the same exposition of faith is set forth by the glorious list of heroes who exemplified faith. Among these heroes is Abraham, who obeyed to go out (11:8) to a distant land and who offered up his only begotten son (11:17).

James appeals confidently, therefore, to the example of Abraham in offering up Isaac upon the altar (cf. Gen. 22:9). He had shown that he served God from love and not merely from fear. His faith had stood the severest of all tests—believing that God would go with him down into the darkness

[5] See Lightfoot, *loc. cit.*

of death and make plain his command that was so hard to obey.

James interprets the case of Abraham with his usual pungency. "Thou seest," or at least, "thou oughtest to see." The deduction is inevitable. "Faith wrought with his works," "faith cooperated with deeds" (Moffatt), just the opposite of "apart from works." It is thus clear that James did not mean to say that Abraham had only works and not faith. It is faith and works with Abraham, as he had contended in verse 18. It is like Paul's "faith working through love," energetic faith. So James adds: "by works was faith made perfect," "completed by deeds" (Moffatt).

Thus with Abraham faith was shown to be alive, not dead; fruitful, not barren; brought to a good result or end, not cut short with mere profession or promise. So the Scripture was fulfilled (made full or complete) in the case of Abraham: "And Abraham believed God, and it [the faith] was reckoned [set down to his credit] unto him for righteousness." Paul in Romans 4 lays emphasis on the verb "believed," and James stresses the obedience which proves the reality of the trust.

Both points are justly made. In each instance faith precedes the works. We are set right with God by trust, but the life must correspond to the new relation with God. It was so with Abraham. He was called "the friend of God." Compare 2 Chronicles 20:7. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" (Gen. 18:17). With the Arabs the term "Khalil Allah" (Friend of God) is the current name for Abraham. Epictetus (bk. II, chap. xvii, § 29) speaks of looking "up into heaven as the friend of God." Plato calls the righteous man "on terms of friendship with God." Jesus calls his disciples "friends," no longer "servants," in John 15:14 f. There cannot be such friendship without trust of the most absolute kind, a trust that means loyalty to the end.

One must not think that James discredits faith. He does not. He assumes the need of it. In verse 24 James uses "justified" more in the sense of final approval (set right at last) than of the initial restoration of peace with God. And even so "the faith as a ground of justification is assumed as a starting point" (Hort).

"Ye see," says James, leaving his imaginary opponent and turning again to his readers. They can see the point, whether the empty-headed disputant does or not. It is hard for a controversialist to see anything but his own side of the question. It is "not only by faith" that a man is justified. The case of Abraham shows that works must follow faith in the natural order of grace. James has administered a severe rebuke to the antinomians who deny any responsibility for holy living and disclaim the force of the moral law. There has always been a curious type of pietism that runs easily into immorality with no compunctions of conscience, a sort of emotionalism without ethical tone or flavor. Abraham was not simply the father of the Jewish people but the father of all the spiritual Israel—the believing children of God in all the ages since, who form the elect of God and of the earth.

The Case of Rahab (2:25)

One wonders why James selects a case like this after speaking of Abraham, the father of the fruitful and God's friend. Oesterley doubts how this verse could come from the pen of a Christian. But James may have wished to select another example at the furthest possible point from Abraham, a heathen and a proselyte, "the first of all the proselytes" in the land of Canaan (Hort). Certainly if a woman like Rahab could be saved, no one else need despair. She expressed her faith in God: "I know that the Lord hath given you the land . . . the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. 2:9, 11, AV). Besides,

she showed her courage by avowing the cause of Jehovah and of Israel, by protecting the messengers (spies, in reality), and by a life of uprightness thereafter.

It was a crisis in the history of Israel as they came to Jericho, and Rahab took her stand for God at the start; hence the high honor accorded her. She is mentioned in Hebrews 11:31 in the famous list of heroes of faith. In Matthew 1:5 she appears in the genealogy of Christ. She was counted one of the four chief beauties of Israel along with Sarah, Abigail, and Esther (Mayor). "Eight prophets who were also priests are descended from the harlot Rahab" (*Megilla* 14*b*). Certainly there is no desire in James nor in Hebrews to dignify her infamous trade, which she renounced, but only to single her out as a brand snatched from the burning by the power of God.

The Union of Faith and Works (2:26)

This is what James pleads for, not the divorce between creed and conduct, which is alas only too prevalent even today. There should be an indissoluble marriage between faith and works, a union as close as that between spirit and body. "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead." By "spirit" here James means simply the breath of life, without which the body is dead. "False faith is virtually a corpse" (Hort).

By this striking paradox James attacks the root of the whole matter and has his last word on the subject. Hort remarks that James by the use of the phrase "justified by works" seems to be answering Paul in Romans 4:2 or a misuse of Paul's "justified by faith" (Rom. 5:1), though he does not see how James could have seen Paul. I have already expressed my own conviction that James and Paul are not really answering one another. They are discussing different aspects of the subject and touch only at points and go off

along other lines. In all probability each would agree to the statements of the other if the language of each were put in the proper perspective. Certainly they agreed when they were together in Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal. 2:1–10). But it is important for us that our faith shall be real and vital, not hollow and dead.

VIII

The Tongues of Teachers

James carries on the discussion of "slow to speak" (1:19). He has just been writing about idle faith in 2:14–26, and now he proceeds (Plummer) to expound the peril of the idle word, "wrong speech after wrong action" (Hort). Indeed, in 1:26 he has already mentioned the failure to bridle the tongue as a sure sign of vain religion. Now he expands the matter in a remarkable paragraph.

The transition is thus not so abrupt as at first seems to be the case, and apparently from the first he planned this discussion of the tongue. Probably it comes here (Plummer) because controversies about faith and works were already rife. Here James speaks "against those who substitute words for works" (Plummer), a rather large class. "In noble uprightness, he values only the strict practice of concrete duties, and hates talk" (Reuss), if it is *only* talk. James has the gift of condensation. He can write on talk without taking twenty volumes, like Carlyle, to prove that if speech is silvern, silence is golden (Plummer). The "overvaluation of theory as compared with practice" (Mayor) condemned in chapter II is still present with James as he discusses the tongue.

An Oversupply of Teachers (*3:1a*)

We are not here to think simply of official teachers like Paul's apostles, prophets, teachers (1 Cor. 12:28 f.; Eph. 4:11). In the Didache (xiii. 2, xv. 1, 2) teachers are placed

on a par with prophets and higher than bishops and deacons. There is no doubt that teaching received tremendous emphasis in the work of the early Christians. Jesus is the great Teacher of the ages and is usually presented as teaching. In the Jewish "houses of learning" (synagogues) teaching was as prominent an element as worship. The official teachers passed away, and the modern Sunday school movement is an effort to restore the teaching function in the churches.

The true preacher should be a teacher also, but many preachers are more evangelistic and hortatory than didactic. The best preachers combine all these elements and build up the saints in the faith to which they have been won. The mission work of modern Christianity also has had to lay new emphasis on the educational side of Christian effort. There is no reason why the morning service in public worship should not be a teaching service and the evening service more evangelistic. Teachers are necessary. People "having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts" (2 Tim. 4:3).[1] Epictetus (bk. III, chap. xxiii, § 29) says: Rufus "used to speak in such a way that each of us as we sat thought that someone had accused us to him."

But James here is thinking of the unofficial teachers in the churches. In the Jewish synagogues there was wide latitude allowed for strangers and others to speak. Jesus took advantage of this opportunity and taught freely in the synagogues (Matt. 12:9 ff.; Mark 1:39; Luke 6:6 ff.). There would be interruption and violent opposition at times (cf. John 6:59–66). Paul used the courtesy to strangers to speak in the Jewish synagogues and met with open opposition at times (cf. Acts 13:15, 45; 18:6).

In Corinth we have a striking instance of the evil of pro-

[1] In Hermas (Sim. 9:22) we read of teachers who "wish to be self-appointed teachers, fools though they are."

miscuous teaching, unrestrained and unregulated (1 Cor. 14). It became necessary for Paul to rebuke the church for unseemly disorder. There were many who were only too ready to be carried away by any newfangled doctrine. There is safety in free discussion, which acts as a safety valve and also leaves a deposit of truth. But the acrimonious spirit had a fine opportunity to display itself. Men of arrogant convictions and little knowledge felt that they "had no need to learn anything from their brethren, but were fully equipped as teachers" (Johnstone), "desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm" (1 Tim. 1:7).

Some men with a certain fluency of speech really had no message and only spoke out of vanity and really "thought more of the admiration which they might excite by a display of their powers than of the light and strength which through God's grace they might give their brethren" (Dale). Evidently James is here concerned with these promiscuous, officious, irresponsible, self-appointed teachers, men with a cocksure explanation of all difficulties, not afraid to rush in where angels fear to tread.

The world was full of roving teachers with every sort of patent ism to dispense to the public. Both Jews and Athenians were eager for something newer than the last stale theory (the very latest fad). The synagogues of the Jews and the churches of the Christians offered a fine platform for these cranks to air their notions. Besides, some of the best of men, earnest Christians, have a "lust for talk" (W. Robertson Nicoll) that leads them into all sorts of excesses.

James, therefore, is pleading for restraint and moderation when he says, "Be not many of you teachers," "do not swell the ranks of the teachers" (Moffatt). Teachers are absolutely necessary, but the thing can be overdone. Some learners (disciples) are needed. Liberty within reasonable limits

must be allowed, but not rank license. Men must not be too eager to teach what they do not know.

There is no danger of an oversupply of well-equipped teachers, who are masters of the message of Christ. There are still too many who are incompetent, and therefore the accent on teacher-training in the Sunday schools is most timely. The caution of James is pertinent today, but we must not discourage timid souls who can learn to teach and who ought to undertake it. The greatness of the teacher's task must not be overlooked. James warns us against its abuse. There is a mental sloth that is as bad as this eagerness to be teachers, a lazy satisfaction with the elements of Christianity and failure to grow into the position of teachers of the doctrines of grace, continuing as babes unable to digest solid food (Heb. 5:12).

The Peril of Teachers (3:1b)

Teaching has to be done. There is no escape from that, but those who teach must understand their responsibility. They are doctors (from *doceo,* to teach) of the mind and heart. They cannot escape their responsibility as spiritual surgeons, for they deal with the issues of life and death, "knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment." In seasons of religious excitement it is particularly desirable that men shall bear this fact in mind. There is danger for the teacher and for those that hear and are led astray by foolish talk.

Feeling was probably running high in some of the churches, and there was occasion for the sobering words of James. "The penalty of untruth is untruth, to imbibe which is death" (Taylor). One has only to recall the words of Jesus: "And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36 f.). It is

easy to be overconfident, like the complacency of the Jews of whom Paul said that each was confident that he was "a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes" (Rom. 2:20). "Blind leaders of the blind" (Matt. 15:14) are they. It is bad enough to break one of the least commandments, but whoever does "and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19).

There is no escaping the fact that a heavier penalty rests on preachers and teachers who leave a trail of error behind them. This point of view explains Paul's anxiety in the pastoral epistles for the future of Christianity, as it had to confront Pharisaism, Gnosticism, Mithraism, the emperor cult, and the hundred and one vagaries of the age. Certainly a teacher must speak his mind. He must be intellectually honest and tell what he sees, but he is not called upon to give his guesses at truth as truth. He ought to be interesting if he can, but not at the expense of truth. Freedom of teaching is quite consonant with fidelity to truth. One does not have to be a mere traditionalist in order to escape wild speculation. He must bring forth things new and old if they are true.

The severest words that fell from the lips of Jesus are against the Pharisees who filled the place of teachers for the Jews but who "say, and do not," who "sit on Moses' seat" as authoritative teachers and yet "strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel" (Matt. 23:2–3, 24). "Woe unto you lawyers! for ye took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52). The child was kept in the dark while at school because the teacher did not let in the light. "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed."

The Test of Perfection (3:2a)

Others besides teachers have pitfalls, for teachers are not the only errant men. "For in many things we all stumble."

James includes himself in this category. The Vulgate reads "ye" in verse 1 (*sumitis*), not willing to admit that James ran any risk about the heavier judgment; but that is not the correct text. James shows no disposition to exempt himself. One and all we make many slips, stumble over something in the path. Our falls are only too frequent. Who is the perfect man? Seneca (Clem. 1:6) says, "We all sin" (*peccamus omnes*). But Epictetus (bk. IV, chap. iv, § 7) uses the word for sin for merely "commit a fault." He has a weak conception of sin. Epictetus also (bk. I, chap. xxviii, § 23) says, "No man stumbles on account of another's action." But surely he is in error here.

Teachers are particularly liable to stumble in speech, for precisely in that sphere their activity lies (Plummer). This point is common to all. Most assuredly, all men are guilty of sins of speech. Each one is sure to stumble there sooner or later. This is a very easy test of one's perfection. He can be prodded by the tongue. "The scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; laying wait [ambush] for him, to catch [as if wild game] something out of his mouth" (Luke 11: 53 f.). Yes, but they were all the more angry when the one perfect Man kept control of his tongue.

Smart lawyers often try to trip a witness in his talk. It is hard to be consistent in talk, true in talk, clean in speech. "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man," "whoever avoids slips of speech is a perfect man" (Moffatt). "Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth" (Prov. 6:2). Compare Sirach 28:12–26 for pungent remarks on speech. "That which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man" (Matt. 15:11). The chemical reaction to talk is a test that we cannot refuse. Teachers cannot escape this inevitable test. The rest of this discussion consists of a series of remarkable illustrations of the power of the tongue.

The Bridle and the Horse (3:2b–3)

The man who does control his tongue is able to bridle the whole body also (cf. 1:26), for the body goes with the tongue. In fact, nothing is commoner than for one to make a rash statement and then feel compelled to stand by it for the sake of imaginary consistency. Hort keenly observes that the force of "also" after "the whole body" is that a man who can bridle his tongue can bridle his whole body. The tongue is a real Bucephalus, and it takes an Alexander to master him. It is really wonderful how a spirited, impetuous horse can be subdued by bit and bridle. The spirit does not go out of the horse, but his restless energy is under control and guidance.

James does not mean that a man should be dumb and lifeless, without ambition and power, but simply that his tongue, like all the rest of the body, should be kept in control. This figure of bridling the tongue, as already noted (1:26), is one of the most vivid figures in all languages. David said: "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Psalm 39:1).

It is not merely that the tongue is so hard to put a bridle on but also that the tongue has such an influence on the whole body, able thus to lead the body by the bridle.[2] The horse has to follow his mouth, in which the bridle is placed. The purpose of the bridle is that the horses may obey us, and it is thoroughly successful, as a rule. "We turn about their whole body also" along with the mouth. So we should place bridles in our mouths for the deliberate purpose of controlling the tongue. It will not happen by accident.

We are to repress the impulsive and petulant word. Thus we train our own tongues and make it easier to subdue

[2] Cf. Hermas, *Mand*, 12. 1.

the other members of the body. One member cannot be allowed to lead the whole body into sin. Pluck it out, if it be the right eye or the right hand (Matt. 5:29). The members of the body are all so related as to be affected by what the others experience. "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee" (1 Cor. 12:21). Without this bridle on the tongue there is no true self-control. A tongue loose at both ends means a man whom everyone shuns as a nuisance. If the bridle is good for the horse, it is far more so for the man. The difference is that the man has to put the bridle into his own mouth and in dual capacity as rider and horse master himself, the most unmanageable of steeds.

A garrulous man is a bore at best, while a woman with a sharp tongue is a terror to the community. Tell no secrets to a talkative man, and few to anyone save your wife. A man who talks to hear himself talk will be sure to tell what he ought not to say. The writer of Hebrews refuses to go on with too many details about his heroes of faith, "for the time will fail me if I tell" (Heb. 11:32), "time will leave me telling." If the audience held the bridle, the preacher might stop sooner. The phonograph can be turned off at will, permitting only so much "canned" talk at a time. And yet talk is one of the most delightful things in all the world. But there can be too much of a good thing, if, forsooth, it is good. There are few greater nuisances than the interrupter, who breaks into a conversation with no regard for the courtesies of the occasion. He is as bad as the man who monopolizes the conversation and allows no one else to talk at all. He needs a stopper, not a bridle, in his mouth.

The Rudder and the Ship (3:4)

With great wealth of imagination James proceeds to illustrate still further the power of the tongue over the rest of the body. The point is clear from the illustration of the bridle

and the horse, but it is made still clearer by the other figures. The importance of the subject justifies this piling up of metaphors. "This combination of the horse's bridle and the ship's rudder as illustrative of the tongue is found" (Hort) in Philo and Plutarch. "The argument is *à fortiori* from the horse to the man, and still more from the ship to the man, so that the whole forms a climax, the point being throughout the same, namely, the smallness of the part to be controlled in order to have control over the whole" (Plummer).

The horse is an irrational creature and yet can be managed by the bridle. The ship has no mind at all and yet is moved "by a very small rudder," "turned about," "whither the impulse of the steersman willeth." The "impulse" may be like "the rush of water" in Proverbs 21:1, which is there compared to the king's heart, for God "turneth it whithersoever he will," or like the rush or onset of the Gentiles and Jews to injure Paul in Iconium (Acts 14:5). Here it is the gentle pressure or touch of the hand of the steersman who guides the ship on its course straight ahead, as he decides (intention, purpose rather than mere will).[3]

The complete mastery of the steersman over the ship is accented by a comparison of the size of the ancient boats with horses. "Behold, even the ships" (probably we are to translate "even" rather than "also"), which, though they are so great (cf. 2 Cor. 1:10), "are yet turned about by the impulse of the steersman," even when they are being driven by rough winds (if here again we translate "even" instead of "also"). One is reminded of the boat in which Jesus and the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee "now in the midst of the sea, distressed by the waves" (Matt. 14:24). The "rough winds" (cf. Prov. 27:16), "stiff winds" (Moffatt), were particularly dangerous for the small (from our standpoint) ships of the

[3] Cf., however, John 3:8 and 1 Peter 3:17.

ancients. But the steersman could hold to his course even over a rough sea.

The point of James about the size of the ships would apply with far more force today, when modern leviathans of the deep plow the waters. There is now less peril from the stiff winds, but there is all the more ground for wonder that the tiny rudder can control at will the giant of the ocean. The steersman can drive the mighty monster straight upon an iceberg and sink it in a few minutes, as in the crash of the *Titanic*. Great as the ship is, the silent forces of nature are still greater. Man has not yet mastered all the powers of nature. But the ship, blind to its fate, responded to the will of the steersman, who dashed against the iceberg.

The lesson is only too obvious. One must watch the tongue if he is to avoid shipwreck. The tongue may dash the whole life in blind rage against God. The ship is one of the most beautiful of objects as it rides the waves in proud majesty. But more beautiful still is a life that is not marred by bad or bitter words. Plutarch (*De Garrulitate*, 10) says that speech beyond control is like a ship out at sea, broken loose from its moorings.

The Fire and the Forest (3:5 *f.*)

The power of the tongue over the body in general is shown by the bridle and the rudder. Now the power of the tongue for evil is specifically illustrated by the metaphor of fire. True, the tongue is a little member, and yet it "boasteth great things," "can boast of great exploits" (Moffatt).

It is not a mere empty boast that the tongue can make. It is hard to exaggerate the power of the tongue, which is able to sway great multitudes for good or ill, to stir the wildest passions of man to uncontrollable fury, or to exalt men to the highest emotions of their natures. The tongue can soothe the dying or damn the living. The tongue can sing like a song-

bird or growl like a lion. The tongue can speak words of tenderest love or of venomous hate. It can speak like a megaphone in trumpet tones or in a whisper almost inaudible save to an eager ear. Plummer tells the story of Amasis, king of Egypt, who sent a sacrifice to Bias the sage with the request that he send back the best part and the worst. He sent back the tongue.

James adds, "Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire," "what a forest is set ablaze by a little spark of fire" (Moffatt). The figure is that of timber or woodland rather than a pile of wood. Mayor quotes Milton: "Into what pit thou seest from what height fallen." The inflammatory Oriental audience with the high pitch of voice, confusion of tongues, and wild gesticulation is aptly compared to a forest fire (Oesterley).[4]

There is pathos in the dreadful forest fires that annually devastate our country. The damage each year amounts to several hundred millions of dollars, besides the injury to future generations in the loss of the blessings in many ways from the forests. In most instances these forest fires, which rage with uncontrollable fury when the wind gets up, are due to accident or mischief. A spark from an engine, a cigarette thrown in the leaves, a burning match cast to one side by a hunter, a smoldering campfire, a shot from a gun—these and other like causes explain most of the conflagrations.

The situation is so serious that the national government has a fire patrol to guard the forest reserves. Once a prairie fire starts there is hardly any stopping it till it burns out. Mice and matches cause over twelve hundred fires each year in New York City. Only a start is needed, a start long enough to get beyond control, and we have the horrible holocausts of

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[4] The Midr. Rabb. on Levit. (xiv. 2) xvi has *quanta incendia lingua excitat* (Mayor).

Chicago, Baltimore, Boston, San Francisco. "A burning fire kindles many heaps of corn" (Sir. 11:32). The scholiast on this verse adds, "There is nothing which more devastates the world than an evil tongue." Nero set fire to Rome to see the grandeur of the spectacle, and he fiddled while the city burned. Similar irresponsibility is seen often in the reckless use of the tongue. We should not light a fire which can blaze beyond our control.

So James adds, "And the tongue is a fire." See Proverbs 16:27, "And in his lips there is a scorching fire." Compare Sirach 28:21–23. "The effect is that of an underground flame, concealed for a while, then breaking out afresh" (Carr). Indeed, "the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue," "the tongue proves a very world of mischief among our members" (Moffatt). The tongue was made for good use and in itself is good, but it has been prostituted to evil. So here the very word for "is" (cf. 4:4, "maketh himself") brings out this distinction. The tongue "is constituted" so, is not so by nature. Now we say that a man's tongue has run away with him. The tongue has made a career for itself, "the world [realm] of iniquity," "the unrighteous world" (Hort). It was made the best of members but has run riot till it has become the personification of injustice and all sorts of wrong. The Vulgate has it here *universitas iniquitatis* rather than *mundus*. One thinks of our use of "university," a world in itself for good or ill.

Jesus spoke of "the mammon of unrighteousness," "the judge of unrighteousness." So the tongue represents the world of iniquity and has become "the chief channel of temptation from man to man" (Mayor). "They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth" (Psalm 73:9, AV). This microcosm epitomizes the macrocosm of evil. Bengel has it *a macrocosmo ad microcosmum*. The evil wrought by the tongue ramifies through

the whole of society and goes on and on in its deadly influence.

It "defiles the whole body," "staining the whole of the body" (Moffatt).[5] The Vulgate has *maculat*. Jesus had said, "That which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man" (Matt. 15:11). At first James seems to overstate the matter, but modern science reinforces his point. It is now known that angry words cause the glands of the body to discharge a dangerous poison that affects the stomach, the heart, the brain. The effect is usually temporary but sometimes fatal. It is literally true that such choler defiles the whole body. Hate has the same effect. The chameleon changes color according to its emotions and environment. The tongue not only commits evil by lying, by defending sin, and by leading to sin, but it leaves a deadly stain in the very body and soul of the one who misuses it. "It is the palmary instance of the principle that the best when perverted becomes the worst—*corruptio optimi fit pessima*" (Plummer).

The tongue "setteth on fire the wheel of nature," "setting fire to the round circle of existence" (Moffatt), "the whole circle of innate passions" (Oesterley), "the wheel of man's creation" (Hort, who adds "one of the hardest phrases in the Bible"), "the wheel of birth" like the Orphic mysteries (P. Gardner), "sets the whole creation in flames" (Johnstone). Perhaps the idea is that the tongue at the center (hub) of the wheel of nature sets on fire the rest of the wheel. One sees just this thing happen in a pyrotechnic display, where a wheel is set on fire in the center. The more it burns the faster it revolves, till the whole wheel whirls in a blaze of fire, spitting fire as it whirls. Certainly, the tongue can set fire to all the baser passions in the wheel of life, such as envy,

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[5] Cf. Jude 23. Cf. also James 1:27 and 2 Peter 2:13. One thinks of the smoke and soot of slander, besmirching all that it touches.

jealousy, faction, anger, avarice, lust, murder. This fire spreads, not simply through the whole man, but may infect "various channels and classes till the whole cycle of human life is in flames" (Plummer). Its range of devastation frequently is wider than the life of the person who spoke.

It is not surprising that James adds, "and is set on fire by hell," "with a flame fed by hell" (Moffatt), *inflammata a gehenna* (Vulgate). It is the devil, the slanderer par excellence, who sets on fire "the chariot-wheel of man as he advances on the way of life" (Hort). It is first inflamed by hell (place of the wicked, not the unseen world for all) and then inflames all the wheel of nature. The torch is lighted in hell, and the hellish flame kindles the tongue, which in turn sets fire to the whole nature. Thus the fire was started and is habitually replenished (the tense is imperfect). The Valley of Hinnom or Tophet was first just the type of the abode of the wicked, and then the continual fires kept burning there were transferred to the next world. (Cf. "the fire of Gehenna," Matt. 5:22.)

But one must not forget that while the tongue can be set on fire of hell, it can also be touched by a live coal from God's altar. Isaiah said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven" (6:5–7).

Let us gain comfort from the experience of Isaiah in the contemplation of the solemn warning of James. One may note also that tongues as of fire sat on the heads of those who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the great day of Pentecost. The tongue can be set on fire of heaven and can

pass on the holy fire of God from soul to soul, thus lighting the light of God in the human life.

Taming of Wild Beasts (3:7 f.)

James recurs to the beasts (cf. horse and bridle) for a broader discussion. The tongue is unbridled all too often and is the most unmanageable of wild animals. He had just said that the tongue is set on fire of hell. "The fact that the tongue is the one thing that defies man's power to control it is a sign that there is something satanic in its bitterness" (Mayor). He uses the language of Oriental exaggeration in giving further proof of his strong statement, a justifiable hyperbole: "For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind." "The art of taming is no new thing, but has belonged to the human race from the first" (Mayor).

It is perhaps not strictly true that every conceivable animal has been subjected by man, but no one in the light of the past and the present can say that any animal is untamable. It is now a common enough thing to see in a wild animal show performing tigers, leopards, lions, elephants, monkeys, dogs, horses, parrots, seals, bears, and even serpents. It is not merely that wild animals may be domesticated (cf. the wolf and the dog), like the zebra and the wild turkey (America's contribution to the world's barnyard), but they may be taught to do acts and tricks that show rudimentary reasoning powers. The eye of man can subdue the lion, the tiger, and the serpent as Jesus subdued the untamable demoniac (Mark 5:4), "and no man had strength to tame him." Man has proved his kingship over the other creatures as God gave him dominion (Gen. 1:26). In many cases animals have become so domesticated that they no longer feel at home elsewhere.

Man is proud of his lordship over beast and bird and over

the forces of nature like wind and wave and electricity. Man can swim like a fish, can run like a deer, and can now even fly like a bird in the airplane with its artificial wings. He can talk without wires with unseen persons over thousands of miles. He can speed over land and sea like the wind. He can send a message around the earth with the swiftness of light.

But he cannot control his own tongue. "But the tongue can no man tame." Here is the language of helplessness, as in the case of the demoniac in Mark 5:4. Strictly speaking, of course, the tongue is merely the organ of speech, and speech is under the control of the mind. By a bold figure James almost personifies the tongue as a separate personality. "It combines the ferocity of the tiger and the mockery of the ape with the subtlety and venom of the serpent" (Plummer). It is thus the very chimera of wild beasts!

This is the picture of the tongue in its natural state, the tongue of the unregenerate man. The Spirit of God can cleanse a man's mouth of profanity and unclean speech. "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile" (Psalm 34:13). Paul puts up the bars: "Nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting" (Eph. 5:4). Once more he says: "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth" (4:29). Surely, if one has such an untamable little animal in his mouth as the tongue, he needs to watch it with ceaseless care. The evil of the tongue echoes and re-echoes through a community and often through the ages. The evil slander can never be stopped. The lie is fleet of foot and eludes truth in a race.

"It is a restless evil," "plague of disorder that it is" (Moffatt), "a disorderly evil" (Hort), *iniquitum malum* (Vulgate). It is unstable and unreliable, inconsistent and quixotic. It can never be trusted to the full. It will turn on one when off guard, like the lion when the keeper turns his eye away. It can be brought under no rules that will work.

"It is full of deadly poison." It is "death-bringing" poison like the poison of asps under their lips (Psalm 140:3). "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear" (Psalm 58:4). The poison of the serpent is deposited in a little pocket under the mouth. So the tongue is charged with the venom of hate, as the serpent with poison. The hiss of the serpent and the hiss of the goose are often reproduced in the sibilant tongue of slander.

Sweet and Bitter Water (3:9–11)

The inconsistency of the conduct of the tongue is graphically portrayed by these verses. Plummer happily terms it "the moral contradictions of the reckless talker." There is in very truth moral chaos if the Christian does not control his tongue. Inconsistency is not an evil per se. If one is wrong, he ought to be inconsistent enough to change and do right. But it is terrible to see a professing Christian lightly lapse into loose and licentious language. "The fires of Pentecost will not rest where the fires of Gehenna are working" (Plummer).

James had spoken (1:8) of the double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. The tongue with the gift of *double-entendre* is one of the very worst, for its word passes muster in polite circles and yet carries to the initiated a sinister or salacious meaning. Epictetus (Ench. xxxiii, § 16) says, "But dangerous also is the approach to indecent speaking." But the double tongue talks one way with one person, another with another; it is the way of hypocrisy, the slick tongue, the oily tongue of the two-faced man whose word cannot be depended upon, whose word is not so good as his bond.

Sirach (5:13) says: "Honor and shame are in talk; and the tongue of man is his fall." He also has this: "If thou blow the spark, it shall burn; if thou spit upon it, it shall be quenched; and both these come out of thy mouth" (28:12). It looks as if

James had seen this passage from the Twelve Patriarchs (Benjamin 6:5): "The good mind hath not two tongues, of blessing and of cursing, of contumely and of honour, of sorrow and of joy, of quietness and of confusion, of hypocrisy and of truth."

We may omit the inconsistency of "sorrow and of joy," for that is the lot of all of us, but certainly the tongue must not play the part of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father," the only instance of this precise combination of words in the Bible, expressing God's power and loving approachableness (cf. Matt. 11:25). The highest function of human speech (Hort) is the praise of God the Father. Note how when Zacharias recovered his speech, he first praised God (Luke 1:64). It is glorious to praise God in prayer, in song, in sermon. "O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise" (Psalm 51:15). "Praise ye Jehovah. Praise Jehovah, O my soul. While I live will I praise Jehovah: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being" (Psalm 146:1 f.).

"Bless, and curse not" (Rom. 12:14). Curse not God in anger or in flippant profanity. The tongue that praises God surely will not profane his name. But curse not men who are made after the likeness of God, those who are like God in their moral and spiritual nature and not like the beasts of the field (Gen. 1:26; 2 Cor. 3:18). And yet, *horribile dictu*, this is precisely what we do. "Therewith curse we men." James here includes himself in the common run of humanity.

The tongue exercises this strange power of running away with us like a runaway horse with the bit in his mouth. The scorn of men for men is seen in John 7:49, in the Pharisees' sneer at the mob: "This multitude that knoweth not the law are accursed." It is most likely, however, personal abuse that James here refers to. Men who are made in God's image are abused by the very tongue that blesses God. We curse

other children of our common Father, God. James does not mean, even by implication, to approve cursing at all. It is the wicked man whose "mouth is full of cursing" (Psalm 10:7). If we do not love our brother, we do not love God (1 John 4:20). And yet "out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing." We make our tongue a sort of combination of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be"—a mild statement all the more effective from its very temperateness.

The point is easy to illustrate. "Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter?" James was familiar with the brackish waters of parts of Palestine. The water of the Dead Sea is really bitter, though fed by the snows of Hermon and the sweet springs of the Jordan valley. The waters of Marah were bitter (Ex. 15:23), and one may recall "the water of bitterness that causeth the curse" (Num. 5:18, 23). See also Revelation 8:11 for the waters that were made bitter. Pliny (N. H. ii. 103) tells a fable of a fountain of the sun that "was sweet and cold at noon and bitter and hot at midnight" (Mayor). It is possible to sweeten water, as we see in the great filtering plants in our modern cities. And sweet water can become bitter. But water is not sweet and bitter at the same time from the same fountain. You have sweet water on Hermon and salt water in the Dead Sea (also called the Salt Sea), but not both in the same place.

The Vine and the Fig Tree (3:12)

James has not only a new image here but also a new point of view (Hort). He has, in verses 9–11, shown the inconsistency of two kinds of speech from the same tongue. Now he goes deeper to the heart behind the utterance. The comparison is here made between the heart and its utterance (tongue). The grape and the fig are the commonest fruits in Palestine. "Each tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke

6:44). Yes, and Jesus had just said (6:43): "For there is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit; nor again a corrupt tree that bringeth forth good fruit." It is not uncommon to find the point made somewhat as James has it. So Epictetus (Diss. ii. 20) says: "How can a vine grow, not vinewise, but olivewise, or an olive, on the other hand, not olivewise, but vinewise?" [6] And Jesus says: "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt" (Matt. 12:33). Once more hear Jesus: "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt. 7:16). It is the appeal to life.

It has been charged that James exaggerates the evil of the tongue, but one who knows life as it is must agree with James. Sirach says, "Curse the whisperer and the double-tongued, for such have destroyed many that were at peace" (28:13). Plummer quotes also a clause from the Syriac that is not in the Greek: "Also the third tongue, let it be cursed; for it has laid low many corpses." Sirach (28:14 f.) continues: "A third [or backbiting] tongue hath unsettled many, and driven them from nation to nation; and strong cities hath pulled down, and overthrown houses of great men. A backbiting tongue hath cast out capable women, and deprived them of their labors." The "third tongue" injures three classes (Plummer): the person who utters the slander, the one who listens, and the one of whom the slander is told. It is a triple sin and only sin. "Neither can salt water yield sweet," James adds, and his conclusion falls with the force of a trip hammer. The crisp wisdom of James about the tongue makes one wonder afresh if his mother had not taught him some of these aphorisms as a child.

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[6] Seneca (Ep. XIII. 2. 25) says: *Non nascitur itaque ex malo bonun, non magis quam ficus ex olea.*

IX

The True Wise Man

The connection between the paragraph about wisdom (3:13–18) and the preceding discussion of the perils of the tongue is very close. James is still thinking of the men who supposed that they had true faith but who did not practice it; "men who supposed that they had a deeper wisdom and a larger knowledge than their brethren, and who were continually asserting their claim to be teachers" (Dale). But Hort considers the passage on the tongue a "long digression," a view hardly tenable. These ambitious teachers had overlooked the havoc wrought by tongue (and pen).

James has given a needed warning about that phase of the subject and now turns to the subject matter itself. The ambitious teacher will do all the more harm if he is not merely a bungler of real wisdom but a disseminator of false wisdom. Already the air was full of all sorts of fads and fancies that appealed to the unthinking and the unwary. The Essenes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Epicureans, the Stoics, the Mithraists, the Gnostics, the Judaizers, the cult of emperor worship, with more or less distinctness were clamoring for a hearing. There were professional sophists who traveled over the country with patent solutions of all problems. Some appealed to the nervous or the neurotic, like Christian Science today; others to the ignorant, like Russellism or Mormonism. Paul will later discuss both speech and wisdom "as

good things liable to grievous abuse" (Hort), in 1 Corinthians 1:5, 17; 2; and 3.

The Call for the Wise Man (3:13a)

"Who is wise and understanding among you?" The question does not mean that nobody is wise and understanding, but it calls a halt on the rush of volunteers who have apparently a superfluity of wisdom. An overplus of conceit is intolerable for normal persons. Job (12:2) has our sympathy when he retorts to his officious advisers: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Once more Job (28:12) asks: "But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" Here, as very often in the Old Testament, we have wisdom and understanding used together. God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding (1 Kings 4:29). "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; . . . get understanding" (Prov. 4:7). In Psalm 107:43 we have the question: "Who is wise?" James is thoroughly acquainted with the wisdom literature of the Jews, both canonical and uncanonical, and is at home in the handling of this theme. His words are not many, but they carry much of depth and power.

Many of the professional wise men, then as now, were frauds who easily duped the gullible populace. They were magicians like Simon Magus, who gave it out that he was some great man, and the idle crowd took him at his high estimate of himself (Acts 8:9 ff.). Note also the cases of Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6 ff.) and the Jewish exorcists (19:13 ff.). The success of these men is one of the most humiliating contemplations about our common humanity. Carlyle bluntly called most people fools. But there were really wise men then also, like the Magi and others, who sought light and truth. Oesterley thinks that James by this question appeals to the self-respect of his hearers, who are tired of men with "the lust

of teaching and talking" (Plummer). James is still directing blows at sham religion, and there is ample cause for such attacks in all the ages. Hypocrisy flourishes in all ages and in all climes. This meanest of parasites has a marvelous vitality.

The combination of "wise" and "understanding" is not without point (cf. Deut. 4:6; Isa. 5:21). This is the only instance of the combination in the New Testament. In classic Greek the second word was used of a skilled or scientific person who had gained technical knowledge of a subject. It implies personal acquaintance and experience, not mere abstract knowledge or intellectual apprehension of the theory of a thing. It is book learning plus practical application, as opposed to one without this special training. Then the word for wise is given by Clement of Alexandria (Strom. I. v.) to mean "the understanding of things human and divine, and their causes." It is the word found in the term "philosophy" and implies thoughtfulness, penetration, grasp of the relations of things, and the right use of one's knowledge for the highest ends. There are learned fools, men who have a lumber of learning in their heads but in a disorderly jumble. In the use of James the only really wise man is he who places God in the center of his life, who serves Christ as Lord and Master, who keeps the intellect in subjection to the will of God.

There are plenty of ignorant fools also, men who have neither intellectual apprehension nor practical wisdom. It is hard to tell which is the sadder spectacle, the learned fool or the ignorant fool. But, certainly, a premium is not to be placed upon either class. Both classes of fools are to be kept out of the ranks of teachers and preachers if it can be done. Advice on all sorts of subjects is so plentiful that there seems to be an abundance of easygoing wisdom. But the world is still eager to listen to the true wise man if he can be found

(cf. Van Dyke's *Other Wise Man*). But the very reputation for wisdom may lead to posing as a wise man. James dares to challenge the candidates for teachers of wisdom in the churches. Is it not possible that not enough care is taken in the choice of teachers in the churches and the ordination of preachers of the gospel?

The Proof of the Wise Man (*3:13*b)

Wisdom is not a matter for mere technical inquiry. One has to stand an examination on wisdom; but it is that of life, unwritten and written—that of deeds, not of words. "Let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom." This test of the wise man is put in a peculiarly Jacobean style. The very position of the word "show" is emphatic; it is the first word in the sentence. If one may use the vernacular, we are all "from Missouri" and "have to be shown" when it comes to each other's wisdom. The test is the acid test of deeds, not words. We may quibble over words and talk like a wise man, but time will prove our words by our deeds.

One may speak like a wise man and in reality be the biggest sort of a fool, yea, a scoundrel. People have learned to discount mere talk when it stands alone. Just being a preacher is not enough. One must practice what he preaches. The Roman Catholic doctrine relieves the priest from the obligation to live the morality which he preaches, but surely that is a travesty on the ethics of Christianity. It is false ethics and false religion. People have a right to hold the preacher to the standard of the gospel, just as he has the right to urge upon them the highest ideals of conduct. There is a wonderful leveling process going on all the time. Lincoln said with rare wisdom that a man may fool all the people part of the time and some of the people all the time, but not all the people all the time.

The greatest asset that the preacher has, after all, is his

life, a long life of piety and consecration. There is no answering that argument—"by his good life his works." This is the only proof that counts in the long run. The King James Version has here "good conversation," which was at one time good English (*conversatio, conversari*), originally one's conduct or bearing (turning oneself about, the precise idea in the Greek word). But long ago the English confined the word to talk, perhaps because some people did little else but talk. But quaint English must give way to the modern preciseness of speech.

It is the beautiful manner of life that speaks the language of business today, the flower of a white life that adorns the profession of the service of Christ. But even so, it must be behavior that is sincere, that finds expression in acts, not mere external mannerisms, posing, attitudinizing, stage effect. Nothing is more repulsive than professional pietists who attract attention to themselves rather than to Christ the Lord. It is a case pre-eminently where actions speak louder than words and where words alone do more harm than good. Bengel puts it tersely: *re potius quam verbis.* In simple truth, the more a man says in claim of superior wisdom, the less he is credited with the possession of any wisdom.

But it is not merely a case of deeds versus words but also of "gentleness and modesty versus arrogance and passion" (Mayor), "in meekness of wisdom," "with the modesty of wisdom" (Moffatt). Meekness was not ranked high among the Greeks. Aristotle (Eth. Nic. IV. v) considered it a second-rate virtue, "the mean between passionateness and impassionateness" (Plummer). Epictetus (bk. II, chap. i, § 36) says: "But think that thou art nobody and that thou knowest nothing."

The Christian conception rests upon the idea in the Psalms that meekness is a favorite trait of the devout. "The meek will he guide in justice; and the meek will he teach his way"

(25:9). "Jehovah upholdeth the meek" (147:6). In Sirach (3:18) we read: "The greater you are, the more you humble yourself." But there is no word comparable to that of Jesus, who said of himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29), in his plea for men to come to him as teacher. It is an essential prerequisite in the teacher, else he is unapproachable and is aloof and cold. Jesus pronounced a Beatitude on the meek (Matt. 5:5), but he did more—he exemplified meekness in his life.

By meekness James does not mean effeminacy or weakness (any more than did Jesus). He does mean the absence of pretentiousness and wilfulness. Peter (1 Peter 3:15) uses the expression "with meekness and fear" for the spirit with which one is to defend the faith, the "reason concerning the hope that is in you." There can be firmness and courage without bumptiousness and bigotry. There are frequent exhortations in the New Testament along this line (cf. Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:24; 1 Cor. 4:21). The wise man wears the crown of modesty. This spiritual paradox seems absurd to the merely worldly-wise.

The Disproof of the Wise Man (3:14)

"The possession of wisdom was made a claim to teachership" (Hort). So the absence of wisdom is a positive disqualification. One may, no doubt, possess wisdom and yet not be able to teach. But the lack of wisdom is itself a sufficient bar. The wrong spirit shows the lack of wisdom. "But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart," what then? There were many controversialists who had both of these vices.

Jealousy is not evil per se. It wavers between the good and evil sense and in itself is merely zeal, which may be for good or ill. (For the good use see 2 Cor. 11:2; Gal. 1:14.) Sometimes this zeal was not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2).

Envy is distinguished from zeal (emulation) by Aristotle (Rhet. ii. 11. 1). But in the New Testament the bad sense of this word prevails (James 4:5; 1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:20; Rom. 13:13), and it is listed with the works of the flesh. The bitterness of jealousy is only too well understood by those who give way to this petty vice. It tastes bitter, and the taste lasts a long time. Bitterness is itself punishment enough for the victims of the sin (Eph. 4:31).

The other word, "faction" or "party spirit," has an uncertain etymology, probably from the word for hireling. At any rate, the word is soon applied to partisans who court and bribe adherents to their candidate. It presents the very quintessence of partisanship and of narrow-mindedness. This is not a mark of wisdom and is not a thing to boast of, at any rate. "Glory not" about it, "do not pride yourselves on that" (Moffatt). And yet this is precisely what many of the Jewish Christians were doing already. Thus they lied against the truth, were "false to the truth," as Moffatt has it. Such partisan triumph is usually obtained by underhand methods and by the suppression of part of the truth. There is such a thing as "poisoned truth." So partisan victory often leaves a bitter sting, because those in defeat know that an unfair advantage has been taken of them and of the truth of God.

It is clear that these opening chapters in the Epistle of James reveal a pitiful condition of controversy among some of the Jewish churches, such as Paul has to rebuke in Corinth later (cf. 1 Cor. 1–4). "The whole Christianity of many a devotee consists only, we may say, in a bitter contempt for the sins of sinners, in a proud and loveless contention with what it calls the wicked world" (Stier).

The point of James is precisely this. The very contentiousness which they regarded as supreme proof of their qualifications as exponents of the faith is here urged by James as absolute proof that they are disqualified for the position of

teachers. Their bitterness makes it improper for them to talk about love and gentleness. Sometimes the very fierceness of one's contention for orthodoxy drives some people into heresy. It is a sad outcome when one's high and holy ambition to teach the things of Christ is frustrated by a Christless spirit of wrangling and personal abuse.

The Wisdom from Below (3:15 f.)

Wisdom is precisely what we all need and desire, but the bitter self-seeking partisans just described "do not cherish the truth except as a possession of their own, or a missile of their own" (Hort). "This wisdom," claimed by the pompous bigots in verse 14, can only be so described in terms of courtesy or, more exactly, of irony. It is only wisdom so-called and is real folly. It is at best worldly wisdom, "earthly," not merely in the sense of taking place on earth rather than in heaven (John 3:12) but with the earthly horizon and outlook as opposed to the heavenly, like those who mind earthly things (Phil. 3:19). Such a wisdom passes for "the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. 1:20; 3:19) but is distinctly not "God's wisdom," "a wisdom not of this world" (1 Cor. 2:6 f.).

"This wisdom" is not merely earthly but does not come down from above, more exactly, "is not of a kind that cometh down" (Hort)—not such a wisdom, indeed, as God gives (James 1:5). It has the smell of earth in the evil sense of that term. It is not from above but in reality from below. Jesus said to the Pharisees: "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23). The antithesis is complete both in origin and spirit. The axioms of the selfish, like "look out for Number One," are the wisdom of the devil: "All that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2:4).

This selfish wisdom is merely that of the natural man, not a mark of the regenerate spirit. There is no single English

word that properly renders this word. "Psychic" transliterates it but does not translate it. "Sensual" makes it too much a matter of the body, as does "fleshly," like the Vulgate *animalis*. It does not appear in the Septuagint and only six times in the New Testament (James 3:15; Jude 19; 1 Cor. 2:14; 15:44, 46). The broad distinction between soul and body or mind and body (dichotomy) is not so hard to grasp, but the threefold division (trichotomy) into spirit, soul, and body, as in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, seems to place the psyche below the pneuma.[1]

It seems clear from 1 Corinthians 2:14 that the spiritual man is the regenerate man, while the natural man is the unregenerate man in his unsaved state of sin. So here, therefore, this earthly wisdom is that of the unregenerate man; it is not sanctified wisdom. He may not be carnal, the slave of the animal passions, but merely coldly unspiritual. Such a wisdom does not reach the higher levels of the man's nature.

But it is still worse. Such a wisdom is demoniacal, devilish (*diabolica*, Vulgate), "in that it raised up the very devil in the hearts of both opposer and opposed" (Oesterley). It is wisdom such as that which demons have (Bengel), not such as God gives (1:5). It is the wisdom of those who do the will of the flesh (Eph. 2:2 f.), who follow the teaching of demons (I Tim. 4:1). One is reminded of the words of Jesus in John 8:44: "Ye are of your father the devil." "Thus the wisdom shared by demons answers to the faith shared by demons of 2:19" (Hort), the tongue set on fire by hell (3:6).

It is indeed a keen knowledge of human nature that James here reveals, but it is a sad indictment all the same. It reads like nature in the rough, red in tooth and claw, the law of the jungle, not the law of grace. It is Nietzsche's superman,

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[1] Cf. Jude 19. See also 1 Cor. 15:45 for a distinction between these words.

not the love that serves, that came to minister and not to be ministered unto. The might of right is not understood by those who hold that might is right. There is a new paganism today in Berlin, in Paris, in London, in New York. It is very subtle and very scornful of the pity of Jesus.

Red blood is a good thing, to be sure, so be it that it courses through a clean heart. The survival of the fittest is the law of nature, but fittest for what? The law of the wolves is to turn and devour the wolf that falls in the chase. The philosophy of Nietzsche is a bit more brutal in its plainness of speech than the wisdom of the world usually puts it. But even so, its demoniacal character stands out more sharply. "I want; therefore, I have the right to get." This is the policy of aggression on the part of nations and individuals, of rogues and rapists, of grafters and white-slavers, of bank-looters and oppressors of labor.

The further comment of James elucidates his point: "For where jealousy and faction are (v. 14), there is confusion and every vile deed." Jealousy and faction come from the devil. He sows suspicion in the churches, in the midst of families, in the hearts of those who let him in. James had already (3:8) accused the tongue of being a restless evil and (1:8) had spoken of the unstable man. God is not the God of confusion but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33), so that the factions in the churches cannot claim God as supporting them, any more than nations at war have the right to make flippant claims that God is on their side in a conflict.

Oesterley has a fine description of the spirit of the professional controversialist: "Acute argument, subtle distinctions, clever controversial methods which took small account of truth so long as a temporary point was gained, skilful dialectics, bitter sarcasms, the more enjoyed and triumphed in if the poisonous shaft came home and rankled in the breast of the opponent—in short, all those tricks of the unscrupulous

controversialist, which are none the less contemptible for being clever—this was wisdom of a certain kind." But in reality it left the way open for "every vile deed," for the word here for "vile" means worthless, not immoral.

In the realm of morals what is merely indifferent soon gets to be bad. The Vulgate puts it *omne opus pravum.* So in John 3:20 we read: "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light." Bugs and bats hate the light. There is a toboggan slide in sin. The easy way is the evil way. See per contra James 1:17. Anarchy brings moral chaos (Plummer) to the soul as to nations. The wiseacres of the world play havoc with the souls and bodies of men who follow their lead to hell. In every town there is a bunch of men who cling together in their evil life and profess a wisdom superior to that of the gospel. They know it is a lie, but they comfort each other and are too proud to break away from the gang. But the end will come. There are no happy old men save those that are Christians.

The Wisdom from Above (3:17)

There is wisdom from above, that is, from God, as James had already said (1:5). This is the true wisdom, God's wisdom both in source and character. James had not, of course, seen Paul's remarks on wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2, if he wrote his epistle by A.D. 50. But he had full opportunity to be familiar with Proverbs, the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon. "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6, AV). "Wisdom may praise herself, and glory in the midst of her people" (Sir. 24:1). "For wisdom is more mobile than any motion; and she also passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. For she is a breath of the power of God, and a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty; therefore no defiled thing falls into

her. For she is a reflection of the everlasting light, and an unspotted mirror of the efficiency of God, and image of his goodness" (Wisd. 7:24–26).

Once more: "For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above every position of stars, being compared with the light, she is found superior" (Wisd. 7:29). But while James is undoubtedly conversant with the wisdom literature of the Jews, he is no mere copyist. He has the Christian standpoint and makes his own contribution to the discussion of wisdom. His words are few, but they fit and strike right to the heart of the subject.

It is "first pure." Purity is the inner characteristic of the wise. It is pretty nearly like the Latin *purus* (pure) and means not so much cleansed (cf. Matt. 5:8, "the pure in heart") as a combination of this idea and consecration as holiness. It is thus free from stain or defilement of any kind (not merely sexual purity), like a ray of light, "in holiness and sincerity of God" (2 Cor. 1:12). Christ himself is called pure (1 John 3:3), the ideal toward which we are to strive. We must learn to put first things first. In wisdom purity of character and motive is absolutely essential at any cost.

"Then peaceable." Important as peace is, purity is paramount. Peaceableness is, to be sure, the outer characteristic of wisdom, and if one has the bright light of inner wisdom, he will have it. But wisdom does not desire peace at any price or at the cost of purity. "All her paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17), and the chastening of God's hand yields "peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). Plummer wisely notes that the order of James here is logical and not always strictly chronological.

One is not to compromise with evil and error, but all the same, if one is to have no peace till he has absolute purity of every sort in his environment, he must needs be always at war and never rest at all. An equation of common sense must,

of course, be struck, though there is the constant temptation to get used to unpleasant surroundings and finally to make no protest at all. Plummer likewise observes that James places the emphasis on the spiritual and moral, not on the intellectual, just the opposite of modern ideals of culture and education. There is nothing in the position of James to justify the Spanish Inquisition, for instance. The persecutor has often consoled himself with the thought that he is doing his victim's soul a real service by rescuing him from his error.

Certainly, if one is pure, it is easier for him to be peaceable, provided he also loves. "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18). There is a great deal in the New Testament on the subject of peace. It is true that Jesus said, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34), when men are wedded to sin and can only be shaken loose by the sword of truth. But there are those who let the peace of God rule in their hearts as umpire (Col. 3:15). We are to pursue the things of peace (Rom. 14:19) as men of peace but not to be afraid to stand up for truth and righteousness (purity), even if we have to fight.

Then "gentle," "forbearing" (Hort). The word is used by Thucydides (viii. 93) of men who will listen to reason, and (i. 76) of moderation, like the Latin *clementia.* Originally the word meant what was fitting, fair, reasonable, but it was also associated with the idea of yielding, "implying one who does not stand on his rights, but is ready to give way to the wishes of others" (Mayor). Matthew Arnold gathered the idea into his phrase "sweet reasonableness." Aristotle (vi. 11) uses it of the forgiving man, one who does not stand on strict justice but who listens to merciful consideration. Certainly gentleness is the true mark of the gentleman who does not stickle over little points, who, in a word, is considerate.

The Christian wisdom, therefore, does not like to give

pain. Paul makes an appeal "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:1). See also Acts 24:4; 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 3:2; 1 Peter 2:18 (gentle masters); and in particular, Philippians 4:5: "Let your forbearance be known unto all men." It means the very essence of fairness as opposed to unreasonableness (Ps. Sol. 5:14). Compare Paul's panegyric on love (1 Cor. 13).

It is also "easy to be entreated," "conciliatory" (Moffatt). The word is a common one for military discipline (4 Macc. 8:6; Jos. War ii. 20, 7), though it does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. As "gentle" refers usually to one in a superior position, so this word is used mainly of one in an inferior rank (Mayor). The good soldier is the one who has learned how to execute orders. Philo employs it as the opposite of the disobedient. It is *tractabilis,* not *morosa.* The Vulgate has *suadibilis.* It is a word in common use about children, pupils, all who obey laws. If preachers were always gentle, perhaps the church members would be more docile and teachable. This wisdom from above is *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re.*

It is also "full of mercy and good fruits." This is just the reverse of the party feeling already condemned. Mercy is the active principle of compassionate love. One may note already 1:8, 27; 2:13 in contrast with 2:15. This wisdom bears good ("wholesome," Moffatt) fruits, not mere leaves (empty boasting). The plural (fruits) shows that there is variety and abundance for all. It is not satisfied with abstract virtue but wishes to bless others.

This wisdom is likewise "without variance," "unambiguous" (Moffatt). The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and has puzzled translators a great deal. It is rendered "without wrangling," "without judging," "without partiality," "without distinctions," "undoubted," "without feigning," "without doubtfulness," "undecided," "un-

hesitating," "unwavering," "single-minded." The Vulgate has *non judicans.*

Something can be said for all these renderings. The context must decide.[2] If one considers the use of the verb in James 1:6 and 2:4, probably the idea of decision is the true one here. It is wholehearted conviction, positiveness in adherence to the truth, single-minded devotion rather than the wavering indecision of false wisdom. It is Principal Forsyth's idea of "Positive Preaching" for the modern mind.

It is finally "without hypocrisy," [3] "straightforward" (Moffatt). Here there is no ambiguity as to the import of the word. It is not the hypocritical wisdom of earth, the spurious invitation, but the genuine article. It is sincere, "without show or pretence" (Mayor). The word is used of love (Rom. 12:9; 2 Cor. 6:6), of faith (1 Tim. 1:5), of brotherly love (1 Peter 1:22). The idea here concerns our relations with men as the preceding adjective outlined our attitude toward God (Hort). This wisdom has the ring of pure gold and passes at par value with all men. Surely such wisdom as this will always be in demand by modern men who love reality and hate pretense.

The Harvest of Righteousness (3:18)

In this verse James gathers up the sum and substance of all that he has had to say so far. He has just spoken of peace and of good fruits. He has been insisting on righteous deeds and not mere words, upon a live faith, not a dead creed. "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." "And the peacemakers who sow in peace reap righteousness" (Moffatt). The fruit is righteousness (geni-

[2] The verb means to distinguish, but the resultant idea is extremely variable.

[3] The Vulgate has *sine simulatione.* The Greek word is used of the actor's mask and then for mere imitation, hypocrisy.

tive of apposition). The figure of sowing is common enough. It is the slow process of soil, seed, plant, blossom, fruit, harvest.

This is the life of piety (wisdom) that James lays before his readers. The phraseology occurs elsewhere (Psalm 1:3). Thus Proverbs 11:30: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." So in Amos 6:12 we have "fruit of righteousness." In the New Testament note Philippians 1:11, "filled with the fruits of righteousness," and Hebrews 12:11, "peaceable fruit." There is a difficulty here in the fact that the fruit instead of the seed is sown. But such a prolepsis of thought is not unknown, as in Psalm 97:11: "Light is sown for the righteous." The sower sows in peace, and the harvest of righteousness is gathered in peace. The peacemaker has the rainbow promise of his harvest in due time if he does not faint nor grow weary. "They who make peace show likeness to God, the great maker of peace" (Hort).

X

The Outer and the Inner Life

Oesterley thinks it inconceivable that 4:1–12 could have been addressed to Jewish churches at an early date, while they were still in the fresh glow of the new faith in Christ. He says, "These verses reveal an appalling state of moral depravity in these *Diaspora* congregations; strife, self-indulgence, lust, murder, covetousness, adultery, envy, pride and slander are rife; the conception of the nature of prayer seems to have been altogether wrong among these people, and they appear to be given over wholly to a life of pleasure. It must have been terrible for the writer to contemplate such a sink of iniquity."

Yes, but James does not say that *all* the Christians were guilty of these sins. It was bad enough without overstating the situation. Besides, we have the state of affairs in the church at Corinth to guide us as to the possibility of sins in a young church, and the state of affairs among the Galatian churches is not much better (cf. "so soon departing"). Covetousness and strife early appear in the church in Jerusalem, as we know from Acts 4 and 5. Reaction comes only too swiftly, as is noted after all great revivals; for instance, the years following the Welsh revival. Within a year or two after Paul left Thessalonica discipline was sorely needed in the church there, as we know from 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

The Gentile world was given over to immorality of all

sorts, and Judaism was deadened with formalism. It was no easy task to make real spiritual life grow in such an atmosphere. And yet this is precisely what Christianity undertakes to do. Jesus came that men might have life, spiritual vitality, and might have it abundantly (John 10:10; 20:31). James is chiefly concerned that his readers may share in this new life in Christ and may show the inner reality by the outward expression. He never gets away from this central conception of Christianity. The appearance of sin in hideous forms among the followers of Jesus stirs James to intense indignation. Mayor notes that the severity of tone in this paragraph is accented by the absence of "brothers."

The Origin of War (4:1–2a)

James makes frequent use of the rhetorical question, as here when he boldly demands the origin of the strife among the churches of the Diaspora: "Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you?" This use of question gives life to style and is the mark of a good teacher. Note also the repetition of "whence," which gives added piquancy. In the Epistle of Clement of Rome (xlvi) to the church at Corinth (about A.D. 97) he seems to refer to this passage in James, where he asks: "Wherefore are these strifes and wraths, and factions and divisions, and war among you?" Basically, ecclesiastical strife does not differ in origin and spirit from wars between nations. Sometimes there is even more bitterness. Certainly no wars have been fiercer than the so-called "religious" wars of history.

It does seem like irony that the two world wars should have come after so many years of growth of the peace sentiment in the world. But Christianity is on the side of peace, and Christians must keep up the fight for peace. Jesus left a legacy of peace for individuals and for nations who win it: "My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). There has ap-

peared one evidence of a better public opinion in the fact that in the war each nation sought to justify itself in the eyes of the world as not the aggressor but as being on the defensive. This apology is some concession, at least to enlightened Christian sentiment, which ultimately will banish war from the earth along with slavery, alcohol, the brothel, and other agencies of the devil.

Meanwhile, James occupies the standpoint of the Christian optimist, who fights for the highest and the best. So Simon Peter writes: "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). We need not press the distinction between wars and fightings, though the first means a state of war and the lasting resentment connected with it, while the second refers to battles or outbursts of passion which occur during a state of war. James does not, of course, here refer to wars between nations but to the factional bickerings in the churches, the personal wrangles that embitter church life. "Among you," he adds, to drive the question home.

James answers his first question by a second. "Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members?" James sees an intimate connection between strife and laxity of life. The case of the church at Corinth is a point where factional divisions and gross immorality flourished together. Plato (Phaedo 66) says: "Wars and factions, and fightings have no other source than the body and its lusts. For it is for the getting of wealth that all our wars arise, and we are compelled to get wealth because of our body, to whose service we are slaves."

James and Plato agree therefore in finding the origin of war in the lusts of the body, but they differ in their opinion as to how to treat the body. Plato exhorts neglect and scorn of the body, while James urges the victory of the spirit over the body. "Plato has no idea that the body may be sanctified

here and glorified hereafter; he regards it simply as a necessary evil, which may be minimized by watchfulness, but which can in no way be turned into a blessing" (Plummer).

The source of all war (private and public) is "the pleasures that war in your members." The same word for "war" between the fleshly desires occurs in 1 Peter 2:11, and in Romans 7:23 Paul uses it of the conflict between the two laws of his nature. The word for "pleasure" does not necessarily mean sensual pleasures but that which is sweet and leads to sinful strife (like ambition, love of money or power). In Titus 3:3 Paul combines both words, "lusts and pleasures."[1] "The potential pleasure seated in each member constitutes a hostile force, a foe lying in ambush against which we have continually to be on our guard" (Mayor).

In the *Letter of Aristeas*[2] the question is asked: "Why do not the majority of men receive virtue?" The answer is given: "Because all are naturally without self-control and are bent on pleasures." It must be said that the philosophy of hedonism in this sense of the term has a powerful hold upon the average man. Buddha said trouble came of desire.

It is not an inspiring picture that James here draws, and one would like to believe that he has a wider outlook than the Christian community when he names his bill of particulars. "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war." Here Westcott and Hort make a full stop in their text, and this is probably correct.

The presence of "kill" before "covet" gives a great deal of trouble to the commentators, who find it an anticlimax. Mayor urges the substitution of "envy" for "kill," but there is no manuscript authority for it, and the difficulty is not really mended. Hort has the most probable solution by this

[1] See both terms also in 4 Macc. 5:23. See also Philo, M. 1, p. 445.

[2] Cf. Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, ed. H. St. John Thackeray (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), p. 567.

punctuation: "Ye covet, and have not: ye commit murder. And ye envy, and cannot attain: ye fight and war." At any rate, the humiliating fact remains that lust, covetousness, envy, fighting, and murder are here charged against some of the readers of the epistle.

It looks as if some of them held to the view that they were entitled to all that they could grasp, that Providence was on the side of the heaviest battalions, that might constituted right. "Lust" is here used in the most general sense, like "covet." The failure to find satisfaction leads to jealousy, fighting, war, and even murder. Covetousness leads to fights with individuals and nations. Lust in the narrow sense and murder are common partners. The fight is on in every man's life against all that is low and mean. He can keep a pure life only by living the victorious life. There is also the common oppression of the poor by the greedy and grasping in all the ages. "No man shall take the mill or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge" (Deut. 24:6). So Sirach (34:21 f.) says: "He that taketh away his neighbour's living slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire is a blood-shedder." The opposite of all this pitiful business is seen in the nobility of love as portrayed in 1 Corinthians 13.

Asking Amiss (*4:*2b–3)

The latter part of verse 2 is a puzzle to the commentators: "Ye have not, because ye ask not." Oesterley (following Carr) thinks that we have a string of poetical quotations (*stromateis*), "not very skilfully strung together." Mayor takes it as a mere repetition of "ye lust, and have not" and says that it is not a further step. But surely James does not mean to say that the one reason why the impulses to lust, covetousness, envy, fighting, and murder are not gratified is that men do not pray so as to carry their point with God and

man! That would make prayer a travesty and God a puppet of man's evil desires.

I must believe that this sentence belongs to verse 3 in thought and should be so punctuated. We must always bear in mind that the original Greek text had no punctuation and that we are at liberty to punctuate *de novo* if the context demands it. There is, no doubt, a backward look in "ye have not," but in reality James here starts a new topic, that of prayer. There is a delicate hint in the use of the middle voice here that they had not put their hearts into their prayers.[3] "Ye ask" with the mere form of words and naturally "receive not," "because ye ask amiss," "wrongly," as in John 18:23.

Their prayers are vitiated by the evil purpose, "that ye may spend it in your pleasures," "with the wicked intention of spending it on your pleasures" (Moffatt). Even Epictetus (Cod. Vat. 3) says of the gods: "And then shall they give to thee the good things when thou rejoicest not in pleasure, but in virtue." How often we all miss it in prayer! We ask for what we should not, staking our judgment against that of God. We ask with a spirit of rebellion and not of subjection to the will of God (4:7). We ask, not for the glory of God nor for the blessing of others, but for the gratification of our own selfish pleasures, even when the things asked for are good in themselves.

We may even get to the point where we dare ask God for what is not good in itself. "No asking from God which takes place in a wrong frame of mind towards him or towards the object asked has anything to do with prayer. It is an evil asking" (Hort). God cannot be made a private asset to fur-

[3] See Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, op. cit.*, p. 805. In prayer one must seek with passion. Since the middle voice denotes more earnestness, it is quite frequent in the papyri.

ther our own selfish interests or to serve the wicked world (cf. 1 Tim. 6:4 f.). "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14). The word in James for "spend" means to consume, to waste, to dissipate. It is used of the prodigal son who "spent all" (Luke 15:14).

Prayer is probably the poorest of all our spiritual exercises. It should be the most constant and the most helpful. It calls for searching of heart and all sincerity. It is right and proper to pray for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11), provided we do our daily tasks so as to earn our daily bread. God does not mean prayer to be a substitute for work. Trust is not anxiety (Matt. 6:31), but it is also not presumption. The use of the name of Jesus does not cause the door of grace to spring open for us unless we first put ourselves under the rule of Jesus.

The Friendship of the World (4:4)

The words "adulterers and" of the Authorized Version are not genuine, occurring in late documents. The sudden outburst of "ye adulteresses," "wanton creatures" (Moffatt), leaves one in doubt whether James is singling out one special form of sin so common in the world (Hort) or is using the word in the figurative sense (Mayor) so frequent in the Old Testament for the sin of idolatry (cf. Psalm 73:27; Ezek. 23:27; Hos. 2:2; Isa. 57). Jesus denounced his age in Palestine as "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matt. 12:39). It will make good sense with either interpretation.

Oesterley argues that "the depraved state of morals to which the whole section bears witness must, in part at least, have been due to the wickedness and co-operation of the women, so that there is nothing strange in their being specifically mentioned in connection with that form of sin with which they would be more particularly associated." Such a sin ought not, to be sure, to be found among Christians, but

1 Corinthians 5 shows how early it appeared in the church in Corinth, a peculiarly licentious city.

The pressure of the easygoing, laissez-faire life of the world on this point is hard upon true Christians in all the ages. It is not merely that a double standard of morals is claimed by men of the world for themselves, though denied to their own wives, but they are aggressive against the virtue of the daughters and wives of other men. This agelong evil is condoned even by women of the world who are clean themselves, in a blind surrender to the fact that men seem to be hopelessly evil.

If the word "adulteresses" is here taken literally, as is probable, James makes a bold appeal to women of pleasure to cease from sin and to let God rule in their lives. It is surely worthwhile to make such an appeal even to those who seem to be hopelessly abandoned to the evil world. But it is preeminently worthwhile to seek to warn, and to prevent from ruin, the young men and women of our day. "Know ye not," says James with heat, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" Pastors sometimes find men and women living in adultery and complacently keeping up their church connections. James means to show the utter inconsistency of such a course of conduct.

But if "adulteresses" is taken in the figurative sense, there is still the friendship of the world that is enmity with God. The friendship of the world is preferred to that of God. "World" [4] here is not the earth with all its beauty and charm (God's world made by him; cf. Psalm 19), nor mankind, for

[4] The cosmos was originally "order." The order and beauty of God's world are attractive to the right-minded man (Rom. 1:20). It is applied to the people of the earth (John 1:29) and then to the believers who are alienated from God (John 8:23; 12:31), to this world which the devil rules (John 14:30; 1 John 5:19), whose spirit is hostile to that of Christ (1 Cor. 2:12), against which James has already (1:25) warned his readers.

whom Christ died (John 3:16), but that world of selfish pleasure and sin out of which Christ called his disciples and which in turn hated them as it hated Christ (John 15:18 ff.). This world will only love as a familiar friend those who cater to its ideals and standards, who condone its slackness of morals and neglect of God.

This cleavage between the wayward, wicked world and the kingdom of God is a fact of the utmost significance (John 17:15 ff.). The Christian has to learn the secret of living in such a worldly atmosphere without being contaminated by it. One does not wish to be considered a religious crank and queer. He desires to have influence with his friends and business acquaintances. But one cannot be a "hail fellow well met" in sin and every form of worldly indulgence and retain his influence for God. The time comes when a choice must be made between friends, for that sort of life in the world becomes incompatible with friendship with God. One must make his choice. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). One cannot run with the hare and the hounds. The devil makes no objection to such a double life of hypocrisy, but God does. God is gracious and forgiving to sinners who repent but has no mercy for presumptuous sinners who defy his kindness and keep in touch with the devil and his circles of evil.

The word "enmity" is the term for personal hostility. Preference for sin constitutes a personal offense toward God, who can have no rival, any more than a true wife can suffer a rival in the affections of her husband. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). One must make his choice. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). Plummer argues clearly that James does not

condemn the scientist's love of nature or the sociologist's enthusiasm, which is not always shared in by preachers as much as is desirable.

Preaching often is so given to denunciation of sin that it fails to exalt the possibilities of the right sort of manhood. It thus repels the very men that it wishes to attract. So far from that, love for man is one of the main proofs of love for God (1 John 4:20). The passion for the souls of men is the true mark of the redeemed. Paul (Titus 2:12) urges that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live . . . godly in this present world" (or "age" more exactly). "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God," "whoever, then, chooses to be the world's friend turns enemy to God" (Moffatt).

A person makes his choice as he is able to do by the exercise of his own will and purpose. But once and finally made, he renders himself *ipso facto* an enemy to God. There is no help for it so long as God is really the God of purity and righteousness. Josephus calls Poppea, the infamous wife of Nero and proselyte to Judaism, a worshiper of God (*Ant.* xx. 8. 11), but surely such "worship" was not acceptable to God. James (2:23) has termed Abraham "the friend of God," but he entered into that relation to God on terms of obedience to God as Lord. On no other terms is friendship with God possible. It is not a question of one's feelings but of the actual state of affairs. "To be on terms of friendship with the world involves living on terms of enmity with God" (Hort).

The word "friendship" does not itself occur elsewhere in the New Testament, though it is found several times in Proverbs; but the words "friend" and to "love as a friend" are common enough. Gildersleeve (*Justin Martyr,* p. 135) notes that Xenophon uses the two verbs for love as synonymous. But in the New Testament there is a distinction drawn in

John 21:15–17. The one is the "deeper" and richer word, while the other is the "more human."[5] Certainly one has no right to claim intimate family relationship with God as his friend while at the same time living in adulterous relations with the sinful world that hates God. The "seductions of the world" (Plummer) are very real and very many, but surrender to them is not constant with the fellowship of God. The law of spiritual life is not always understood. Some men wonder why they are not spiritually happy, why they do not enjoy religion. They are living in sin with the world and yet marvel at their lack of communion with God.

The Yearning of the Spirit for Us (4:5 f.)

"Or think ye?" says James, as the alternative. Either the friendship of the world is enmity with God or you think "that the scripture speaketh in vain." "What, do you consider this an idle word of Scripture?" (Moffatt). This rhetorical question expects an indignant denial. Therefore, the argument holds that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. But what is the Scripture? Is it only the passage in verse 6 that is referred to? The punctuation of the Revised Version allows that. We have two questions before the one quotation. But it may be that the general sense of Scripture is meant by the first question. Usually "the Scripture" occurs before a direct quotation, as in Romans 4:3.

Some would take the rest of verse 5 after the first question as a quotation, although no such quotation occurs in the Old Testament. The general sense appears in various parts of the Old Testament, as in Exodus 20:5: "I am the Lord thy God, a jealous God." Compare Isaiah 63:8–16; Zechariah 8:2. Oesterley even sees a direct allusion to Galatians 5:17, 21; Romans 8:6, 8; 1 Corinthians 3:16, and an argument for

[5] Moulton and Milligan, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

the late date of the Epistle of James. But this is forcing the matter rather stiffly. The New Testament writers seem to have used chains of quotations (catenae) as, for instance, in Romans 3:10–18. Paul probably makes a free paraphrase of Isaiah 64:4 in 1 Corinthians 2:9, and of Isaiah 60:1–2 in Ephesians 5:14. Either this is what is done here, or James is already referring to verse 6, a quotation from Proverbs 3:34.

It is not necessary to take the second sentence in verse 5 as a question. We may follow the margin: "The spirit which he made to dwell in us he yearneth for even unto jealous envy," or "with jealousy doth He yearn after the spirit which he causeth to dwell in us" (Hort), or "He yearns jealously for the spirit he set within us" (Moffatt). In one case (the question) we take "the Spirit" as a subject and as the Holy Spirit. In the other case (the affirmation) we take "spirit" as object and as our redeemed spirit planted in us by God (cf. Rom. 8:4–16 for both ideas). In either rendering it is the Spirit of God (cf. Rom. 8:9) who dwells in us and helps us strive against the evil forces of the world in our own hearts.

God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts (Gal. 4:6), who helps us in the fight with the flesh (Gal. 5:16–26). It is the doctrine of the indwelling Spirit of God, a very precious doctrine in the New Testament (John 7:39; 16:7; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 3:16; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:17; 4:30). The Spirit of God has made his home in us. This is our glory and our hope.

The word for "yearn" is a very strong one. It is the verb in Psalm 42:1: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Peter uses it of the longing of newborn babes after the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2). So Paul yearns after the Philippians (1:8).

There are many interpretations and many ways of punctuating the words "unto jealous envy" or "with jealousy." We may not tarry over them. Probably the idea is that the

Holy Spirit covets our souls. He does not wish the devil to have us. Usually this word for jealous envy has a bad sense, but the context here makes it clear. God is a jealous God. He can brook no rival in our hearts. God wishes the whole of our heart's love, not just a part. He claims the rights of a loving husband to all our heart's devotion. In our hours of doubt and weakness "the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). We may thank God that he is a jealous God for his people Israel. He broods over his children with a mother's love, longing for their growth and development.

"But he giveth more grace" (literally, "greater grace"), "yet he gives grace more and more" (Moffatt). The words "giveth grace" come from the quotation following (Prov. 3:34). The effect of this jealous affection on God's part is not to abandon us but to heap more and richer favors upon us. God demands of us wholehearted surrender and service, but he pours out the wealth of his love upon us. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

This Septuagint quotation (see also 1 Peter 5:5) is a free translation of the idea in the Hebrew text. It is the striking figure of God standing in the way, across the path of the proud man who carries his head so high above others. He will in due time be brought low. Pride goes before a fall, for God is to be met along that road (cf. Acts 18:6; Rom. 13:2). The man of the world feels no need of God and feels secure and serene. But he reckons without his Host. God shows favor to the humble (cf. the contrast in 1:10).

The proud men think themselves the monopolists (Hort) of divine favor, but they find out sooner or later that they are passed by in favor of the man with lowliness of spirit and nobility of life, who makes God, not the world, the Lord of his life. This man God honors with far more grace than the world can offer. He will have trouble ("with persecutions"),

no doubt, "but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time," while "in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10: 29 f.). The prince in God's kingdom and at his court is not the man who wears the trappings of earthly rank and station but the one who caught the spirit of Jesus and sought to do good to all as he found opportunity. Plummer wonders if James had not heard his mother recite the Magnificat. Certainly he here echoes the same beautiful spirit.

Choice Between God and the Devil (*4:7–8a*)

It comes to this, that a man must decide whether or not God is to rule his life. It is self or God, and that is the same thing as the devil or God, for a self without God is ruled by the devil. "Be subject therefore unto God," since, as James has shown in verse 6, God gives grace to the humble and withstands the proud. "The proud spirit has to be curbed" (Oesterley). Peter has expanded this idea in a great passage (1 Peter 5:6–9). Our only hope is under the leadership of God. The devil is the "prince of the world" (John 14:30), and he has plenty of help in the world rulers of darkness (Eph. 6:11 f.). The proud and self-willed are sure to fall into his condemnation (1 Tim. 3:6).

"But resist the devil." Take your stand (note the aorist tense) in the face of the devil, the great hinderer and slanderer. The fight is on between the forces of God and Satan, and one must take sides. A man once said that he wished to be impartial in the struggle between God and the devil. That species of liberality is out of the question. He that is not with Christ is against him. There is no middle ground.

James does not stop to parley over the existence of the devil. He assumes the reality of the dread agent of evil, who is bent on the destruction of all that is good in man. The point to see clearly is that there is but one thing to do, and that is to fight the devil, not with fire but with the word of

God, with the help of the Spirit of God. "Get thee hence, Satan," Jesus had to say (Matt. 4:10). "And he will flee from you." The devil will run if we fight him with the might of God. One way to submit to God is to fight off the devil.

But it is not all negative. The converse is true also. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." The Hebrew had a technical term for drawing nigh to God for the purpose of worship (Ex. 19:22; Jer. 30:21). It is not true that the devil is irresistible and it is useless to oppose him (Plummer). This is one of the pleas of the devil himself to break down the resisting power of the human will and so to take all fight out of us. The principle that James here announces is true to Scripture, to psychology, and to human experience. If we draw nigh to the devil, he will draw nigh to us. If we resist him, he will flee from us. If we resist God, even God will finally depart from us and leave us to our sins. If we approach God in worship, he opens his heart to us. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" (Zech. 1:3). "To this end was the Son of man manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him" (Psalm 145:18, AV). God first draws nigh unto us (John 16:16), and when we respond, lo, he is there before us. The place of safety and of power for the Christian is the throne of grace. There he has a mighty Friend and Helper (Heb. 4:16). We can draw close to God, as a child to his father in the dark, and feel his presence.

A Call to Repentance (4:8b–10)

Here James speaks like one of the Old Testament prophets. His epistle, while thoroughly Christian, is yet nearer to the standpoint of the Old Testament prophets than any other book in the New Testament. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners." The priests washed their hands before they entered the tabernacle to worship (Ex. 30:19–21; Lev. 16:4). It was

natural for the language to be applied to moral purity: "I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Jehovah" (Psalm 26:6). See also Hebrews 10:22. So Pilate sought to emphasize his own freedom from guilt by washing his hands (Matt. 27:24), if by so doing he might also soothe his own conscience. It is now as it has always been: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Psalm 24:3 f., AV).

The clean hands signify little in a moral sense—however desirable for sanitary and other reasons—unless the heart is also clean. Indeed, the Pharisees came to make the cleansing of the hands a substitute for moral cleanness (Mark 7:8 ff.). "Purify your hearts, ye doubleminded." The word for purification here is the common one for ceremonial cleansing (Ex. 19:10), but the idea is figurative, as in 1 Peter 1:22 and 1 John 3:3. James seems to refer to Psalm 73:13. "Wash you, make you clean" (Isa. 1:16). The double-minded (cf. James 1:8) must no longer halt between two opinions. They must forsake the world and give God the whole heart. It is a brave word for reality in religion and against the hollow mockery of mere lip service.

In verse 9 we have a rather unusual exhortation for the New Testament. The word for repentance does not mean sorrow but change of mind and life. The need for a change implies sorrow for the sins of one's life, to be sure. But one may have sorrow and still not change his heart and life. The thing that counts is the change, not the degree of the sorrow. But, certainly, sorrow for sin is appropriate and natural for the sinner who turns away from it. There is certainly room for the appeal to "be afflicted, and mourn, and weep" (all aorists with a note of urgency in the tense). One is reminded of the "woe" of Jesus in Luke 6:25. We have here a call to the godly sorrow described in 2 Corinthians 7:10.

There is a time to laugh and a time to mourn; yes, and a time for laughter to be turned to mourning and even for joy to be turned into heaviness, like the poor publican with downcast eyes in the Temple before God (Luke 18:13). "The words express the contrast between the loud unseemly gaiety of the pleasure-seeker, and the subdued mien and downcast look of the penitent" (Oesterley).

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord." This is the only proper attitude for the sinner, whether saved or unsaved. See the same figure in 1 Peter 5:6. The proud Pharisee in Luke 18:11 is the picture of all that worship should not be.

"And he shall exalt you." This is the law of grace, as is often stated by Jesus: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). But the man that humbles himself before the eye of the Lord must do so because of real apprehension of his own sin and need of forgiveness, not for the purpose of future exaltation to be obtained by momentary self-abnegation. The delicate balance of motives here is preserved. The promise will come true only if the person really turns to the Lord with sincerity of heart. Nothing is more needed today than this prostration before God.

Captious Criticism (4:11 f.)

Moffatt places these verses just after 2:13, since this seems to have been its original place. This is the position also given by Oesterley. And yet it is quite possible that James here merely recurs to the subject of the loose tongue, as he had already done once (cf. 1:26; 3:2 ff.). See also 5:12. He has one word more on this burning topic, a sort of postscript on the tongue, an extremely difficult subject to say the last word about. "Speak not one against another, brethren." The tense of the verb (present durative) implies that some of them had been doing precisely this thing.

It is so easy to "talk down on one," to act as critic (cf. Matt. 7:1) of one's brother in Christ. We cannot help forming opinions of each other, but we can avoid captious criticism, sharp and needless censure. The point made by James is that this habit assumes the right to judge the very law of God. It is far easier to play the part of critic of the law than to be a doer of the law. Destructive criticism is always the cheaper exercise and the more useless. Constructive criticism is more creative and much harder.

There is one supreme Lawgiver and Judge, "he who is able to save and destroy." This power belongs to God, the Creator (Matt. 10:28; Luke 6:9), not to man, the creature. The critic of the law prefers to find flaws in the law rather than to undertake to obey it. He assumes that he can enact a better law, but it is all assumption. James shows his impatience with such criticism by saying, "But who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?" See Romans 14:4. In common law we are to give every man the benefit of the doubt and to assume his innocence till his guilt is proven. But in current speech the sharp tongue follows no such rule of reason but creates suspicion and sows hate and strife at every turn.

XI

God and Business

The arrogance of the sinful heart is clearly shown in 4:13 to 5:6. Such a heart prefers worldliness to the worship of God (see 4:1–10) and flippantly criticizes one's neighbors with lighthearted satisfaction with self and a positive love of faultfinding (4:11 f.). This easy arrogance faces the future with unconcern. No look Godward is taken in business ventures. James "opposes the irreligious sense of travelling merchants" (Windisch). These Jews of the Diaspora had come to have a considerable part of the business of the Roman Empire. They professed to be servants of God, but in practice they often denied and ignored the God of their fathers.

Leaving God Out (4:13–15)

One may hope that James alludes to the Jewish merchants, not Jewish Christians. Certainly those Jewish merchants who became Christians continued their business, though not in a godless fashion. The merchant has one of the most useful and most honorable of all callings, but it seems clear that some of the Jewish merchants had already brought disfavor upon the business by their sharp practices. See Sirach 26:29. "A merchant will hardly keep himself from doing wrong; and a huckster will not be declared free from sin." This piece of moralizing is evidently occasioned by some tricks in trade indulged in by Jewish merchants. One is bound to admit

that some modern Jews retain some of the same reputation in certain lines of trade.

But the point that James makes is a peril to Christian merchants also. The keen competition in all kinds of business is a constant temptation to violate the Golden Rule and to ignore God as well as the welfare of one's customers in order to make money and to meet a rival who is unscrupulous in trade. The Christian businessman today can do business on a high plane. Hustle and enterprise need not condescend to underhand methods. It is a pleasure to note the activity of the Gideons, an organization of Christian men who, besides doing other useful things, have placed copies of the Bible in the rooms of most American hotels. These men have not left God out.

In Palestine the Jews held on to the agricultural life, but in the Diaspora they were merchants and bankers. Philo (In Flaccum VIII) gives a picture of the Jewish merchants and bankers in Alexandria. Josephus (Ant. XII, 2–5) alludes to the Jewish traveling merchant about 175 B.C. One of the wonders of history is how the Jews, scattered over the world, finally without a land of their own, have yet by their wits maintained themselves as a race and a religion and have been leaders in business, in art, in music, in politics, in literature.

"Come now, ye that say" is the impatient challenge of James to those who leave God out of account in their plans for the future. The tone of impatience is due to the conviction that one should be so conscious of his own weakness as not to boast about the future. "To-day or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain." And then we shall move on to the next town and work that with our wares, for all the world like a modern "fire sale" or secondhand clothing store with its bankruptcy or fire features. The picture is drawn from life. The use of "this city" is

merely typical, as if James were pointing it out on the map (Mayor), and is more vivid than "such and such a city."

In James 1:11 we read that the rich man shall "fade away in his goings," an allusion to the travels of the rich merchants. We see the rapid movements of the Jewish Christians illustrated by the travels of Aquila and Priscilla, who came from Rome to Corinth (Acts 18:1 f.), then to Ephesus (18: 18), to Rome again (Rom. 16:3), and back to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:19). The phrase "spend a year there" is literally "do a year there," and the idiom occurs also in Acts 15:33; 20:3 (cf. Prov. 13:23).

The wide dispersion of the Jews all over the Roman Empire gave them business connections that made it easy to get new business and to hold the old trade. The very word here for "trade" means to travel into a region to get business, just like a modern commercial traveler. Our word "emporium" is just this word. The Jews made the very Temple itself "a house of merchandise." So then trading implied traveling for business (Matt. 22:5).

In 2 Peter 2:3 a somber light is thrown by this same word: "And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." "And get gain." This is the climax of the whole, the aim of the journeys and the trading. "The frequent conjunctions separate the different items of the plan, which are rehearsed thus one by one with manifest satisfaction. The speakers gloat over the different steps of the programme which they have arranged for themselves" (Plummer). There is no harm in planning to make money or in travel for that purpose. The harm lies in the complete ignoring of God in all their plans.

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow," [1]

[1] Westcott and Hort read in the margin, "the things of the to-morrow day."

"you who know nothing about to-morrow" (Moffatt). James has ample authority in this statement. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). The prohibition implies a carelessness about the future that grew out of indifference to God. There is a rabbinical saying (*Sanhed.* 100*b*) to this effect: "Care not for the morrow, for ye know not what a day may bring forth." James is condemning those who make their plans for the future with God left out, as if all were in their own hands. Jesus spoke the wonderful parable of the rich fool for the benefit of two brothers who were quarreling over the estate: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry" (Luke 12:19).

This was the worldly-wise view of the Cyrenaics and the Epicureans, and it is the standpoint of multitudes of modern men who under the influence of monism (like Haeckel) deny the existence of a personal God or who act as if there were no God (Psalm 14:1). But God replies to the fool, "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" Jesus does not contradict this position when he says: "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34). He is here condemning overanxiety, that is as distrustful of God as reckless unconcern. There is the golden mean of calm trust in God.

We are not to live in a haphazard manner, without plan or purpose. We are to make plans, but we must put God into our preparations. It is cowardly to be superstitious in the anticipation of evil. Some people knock on wood if they happen to boast a bit. Others are superstitious about the number thirteen, about Friday, about the moon, and a hundred other hallucinations. The point with these Jews is not worry or superstition but irreligion. There are multitudes of practical

pagans today who fear not God nor regard man. They carry on their business with no fear of consequences for their evil practices. They wreck a bank or a railroad with equal nonchalance and care not for the suffering caused thereby in the homes of the poor.

As a matter of fact, we are ignorant of the morrow. We do not know the weather of the morrow with certainty, in spite of our gauges and forecasts. Many railroad accidents are due to the unknown elements in the problems of travel. A faulty rail, a broken tie, a weakened wheel, a rolling stone, a careless brakeman, a sleeping switchman, a malicious robber—a hundred and one things may happen, any one of which will cause death to helpless victims. "The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley."

The uncertainty of life is one of the things that a wise man must consider and face. A clot of blood on the brain may cause instant and unexpected death. The heart, driven too hard, may suddenly cease to beat. "What is your life?" He does not mean manner of life or the life principle or eternal life. The question concerns all, the good and the wicked alike. The question as to the character of life pertains to its brevity and uncertainty on earth. "For ye are a vapor," "you are but a mist" (Moffatt). The word is common for smoke, as the "smoke of a furnace" (Gen. 19:28), "vapor of smoke" (Acts 2:19; from Joel 2:30), steam or breath; so our "atmosphere." Job lamented (7:7): "Oh remember that my life is a breath." We are "a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Aristotle (Hist. An. vi. 7) uses these two verbs of the appearance and the disappearance of a flock of birds as they sweep across the sky. The usage occurs also of the eclipse of the sun. The transitoriness of human life should lead to full and hearty recognition of God, not to careless slighting of him.

"For that ye ought to say" (more exactly, "instead of your

saying"), "If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that." James does not, of course, mean that one should always say these words. That gets to be cant or mere claptrap. It becomes repellent to hear one use the name of God flippantly and constantly. Besides, it comes to signify little or nothing, as one may count his beads or say his Pater Nosters with no regard to what he is doing. There should be significance in our acts and words of worship.

The Jews made a point not to use the name of God too familiarly. They often used "the Name" for God, and Christians came to refer to Christ in the same way, "for the Name" (Acts 5:41). The late Jews came, perhaps under Mohammedan influence, to use the formula "if the Name wills" when about to start upon a journey (Oesterley). The rabbis (Plummer) have a story of a Jewish father who, at the circumcision of his son, boasts that with seven-year-old wine he would celebrate for a long time the birth of his son. That night Rabbi Simeon meets the Angel of Death and asks him, "Why art thou thus wandering about?" The angel replies: "Because I slay those who say, 'We will do this or that,' and think not how soon death may come upon them."

The thing that matters is for us to have the right attitude of heart toward God, not the chattering of a formula. God does not have to be propitiated by a charm or amulet. God should be the silent partner in all our plans and work, to be consulted, to be followed whenever his will is made known. Paul frequently spoke of his plans, sometimes mentioning God, as in Acts 18:21 (God willing), 1 Corinthians 4:19 (if the Lord will), and 1 Corinthians 16:7 (if the Lord permit); but also with no mention of God in words, as in Acts 19:21; Romans 15:28; 1 Corinthians 16:5. But always Paul felt that his movements were "in the Lord," as in Philippians 2:24. He never left God out of his life. Indeed, he practiced the presence of God.

Conscious Opposition (4:16)

It is bad enough to ignore God, as so many men do. A slight is almost as hard to bear as an insult. However, a positive refusal to do God's known will is worse. "But now," as is really the case (cf. 1 Cor. 14:6), "But here you are" (Moffatt), instead of your trust in God, "ye glory in your vauntings." In their pride of life (1 John 2:16) they practically defied God. The word meant originally a wanderer about the country, a vagabond, a Scottish landlouper, a swaggerer, an imposter, a braggart. In Job 41:34 we find the "sons of pride." "And I exalted not myself in arrogance" (Test. Joseph XVII, 8). And Jesus said, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27, AV).

These men were exalting themselves at the expense of God. They were running against the known will of God. One of the rabbis says, "It is revealed and known before Thee that our will is to do Thy will" (*Berachoth*, 17*a*). "All such glorying is evil," says James. It is not wicked per se to boast (cf. 1:9), but such boasting as mentioned is wicked. It is not impossible to know the will of God if one will pay the price. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God" (John 7:17). The way opens to the one who is willing to put God to the test. "The boaster forgets that life depends on the will of God" (Mayor).

Negative Sin (4:17)

In a way this verse is a summary of the entire epistle (cf. 1:22; 2:14; 3:1, 13; 4:11). Hence James's "therefore" is quite in point. Moffatt places this verse at the end of chapter 2. Spitta, however, finds no connection in the context and takes it as a familiar quotation. This may indeed be a reference to the words of Jesus in Luke 12:47: "That servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did accord-

ing to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." There is an excusable ignorance or at least a mollifying ignorance (cf. Luke 12:48; Acts 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:13). There is palliation for unconscious sins. But James is dealing with failure to obey the will of God. It is conscious and wilful sin, but of the negative kind.

These sins of omission (*peccata omissionis*) are treated lightly by many people. The Talmud in general takes this easy position on the subject. Oesterley quotes the Jerusalem Talmud (*Yoma* viii, 6) on Zephaniah 1:12: "I will search Jerusalem with candles, and I will punish the men," which adds: "not by daylight, nor with the torch, but with candles, so as not to detect venial sins." But he adds this also (*Shabbath*, 54*b*): "Whosoever is in a position to prevent sins being committed in his household, but refrains from doing so, becomes liable for their sins." And in 1 Samuel 12:23 we read, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (AV).

Jesus made it plain that he considered sins of omission as real sins: "These ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone" (Matt. 23:23). Hear his tragic words to the deluded sinner at the judgment bar: "I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (Matt. 25:42 f.). The repetition of "not" here is like the tolling of a bell. Hear then James: "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." So also Paul urged the Galatians not to grow weary in doing the good or beautiful (Gal. 6:9).

It is so easy to shut one's eyes and not to see the opportunities for service. It is so easy to let prejudice blind us to the needs of the real neighbor, as the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side and left the poor wounded man

to suffer (Luke 10:31 f.). The point that James is anxious to make is that this blindness is sin. The man who has learned how to do the high and noble deed and then falls short has committed a sin. It is a heavy indictment that is here drawn against us. We are charged with not coming up to the standard of our highest knowledge. Plummer comments pertinently on the Roman Catholic doctrine of probabilism, which seeks to excuse the weakness of the flesh and to justify a person in his preference of the lower in the presence of the higher. "So long as it is not certain that the act in question is forbidden it may be permitted." Plummer adds, "The moral law is not so much explained as explained away." Alphonse de Sarasa wrote on "The Art of Perpetual Enjoyment" (*Ars Semper Gaudendi*), a piece of special pleading for the indulgence of the flesh. "The good is the enemy of the best," and the bad is the enemy of the good. Down the steps we go to the bottom of the ladder.

Tainted Wealth (*5:1–3*)

Oesterley finds proof of the "patchwork" character of the epistle in the five paragraphs of the closing chapter. But in a "wisdom" book one does not expect direct connection between the paragraphs. That is not true of the practical portions of the Pauline epistles. In the first eleven verses of this chapter the eschatological standpoint is occupied, possibly that of Jewish eschatology in 1–6 and that of Christian eschatology in 7–11 (Oesterley). Note "in the last days" in verse 3.

James is familiar with the prophetic imagery of the messianic times in apocalyptic style but is very pointed in his courageous indictment of the follies and iniquities of the wicked rich. Johnstone entitles this paragraph "the woes of the wicked rich." Mayor says, "It is not the careless worldliness of the bustling trader which is condemned, but the more deadly worldliness of the unjust capitalist or landlord."

In verse 7 James seems to contrast "the brethren" with the rich of verses 1–6. It is worthwhile to quote Isaiah 33:1: "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee" (AV). And Habakkuk 2:9: "Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil!" Note also the book of Enoch: "Woe to those that build their houses with sin" (94:7); "Woe unto you mighty who violently oppress the righteous, for the day of your destruction will come" (96:8).

Perhaps there is an allusion to the words of Jesus against the Pharisees (Matt. 23:13–36). The Gospel of Luke is held by some to have an Ebionitic tendency because it preserves some plain words of Jesus to, and about, the rich (6:24; 18:24). But Jesus is not hostile toward the rich, for he had friends and followers from the wealthy classes, although he dealt very squarely and honestly with them. Some Jews held that all the rich were wicked, as some modern socialists and anarchists do. But certainly Jesus did not fawn upon the rich or curry favor with them by flattery or compromise. It is easy to denounce classes of men en masse. It requires perspicacity and courage to discriminate, to be just, and to seek to remedy real ills. The rich Jews had already oppressed the Christians and made the conditions of life hard.

The Christians were helpless for any immediate relief. They had little or no power in government and had to live in the social and economic atmosphere created by those hostile to them. It was not a democratic but an imperialistic age. In holding out the consolation that rectification of these grave evils will take place at the second coming of Christ, James does not mean to condone the present situation or to

acquiesce in it. But what cannot be cured can be endured.

Christianity has had a long and hard fight in the effort to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. Ofttimes grasping men of money have used the very church itself as a means of oppression instead of an agent of blessing. It is a sad state when men and women with real social wrongs come to feel that Christianity is a negative factor in their struggle or a positive hindrance to success.

James turns upon these oppressors: "Come now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you." This "come now" is like that in 4:13. "Weep and shriek," Moffatt has it. The word is an onomatopoetic word and is used only of violent grief, as in Isaiah 13:6; 14:31. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The apocalyptic writings have a good deal to say about the miseries that were coming upon them (cf. Joel 2:10 ff.; Zech. 14:6 ff.; Dan. 12:1). The Gospels connect them also with the Day of the Lord (Matt. 24–25; Mark 13:14–27; Luke 21:9–19). Part of the Gospel prophecies were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem.

"Your riches are corrupted," "your wealth lies rotting" (Moffatt). The perfect tense presents the state of rottenness. This ill-gotten gain will not keep; it is already putrid. There is such a thing as tainted money—blood money wrung from the oppressed toilers; money gained by financial legerdemain (high finance) at the expense of helpless stockholders, whose stock is watered for the benefit of the few in control; money made out of the souls and bodies of men and women in the saloon and the white slave traffic.

The ethics of money-making is a large question and a vital one in modern life. It is raised in an acute form by this passage. Christians cannot afford to make money by crushing the life out of business rivals on the juggernaut principle. The Golden Rule ought to work in business. Christ claims

control of money and the making of money. The Christian who acts on the "bulkhead," or compartment, principle of life and keeps his money in a separate bulkhead into which he does not allow Christ to enter is disloyal to Christ. Christ claims the right of a partner in our business, not a silent but an active partner. We are in business with Christ and for Christ. The Christian has no right to have rotten riches. He should have clean money, not filthy lucre. Sound money is more than mere phrase. Money represents labor, and labor is the sweat of brain and brawn. The gambler cannot offer clean money to God. He has robbed a man of his money.

"Your garments are moth-eaten." We have the prophetic perfect here, and James sees the outcome as a reality in a state of completion. It is a vivid picture of fine clothes eaten by moths and full of holes, ruined beyond repair. In the East these rich garments were handed down as heirlooms from generation to generation and often formed a considerable part of the wealth of a rich man. Paul refers to this when he said, "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel" (Acts 20:33). The picture of an old moth-eaten garment is forlorn in the extreme. "Though I am like a rotten thing that consumeth, like a garment that is moth-eaten" (Job 13:28). A plutocrat is subject to the fate of all mortals.

"Your gold and your silver are rusted," "lie rusted over" (Moffatt). As a matter of fact, gold does not rust in the ordinary sense, except by chemicals, though silver tarnishes rather easily. However, this verb is used in Sirach 12:11 of a mirror dimmed with rust; but the Hebrew word is used also of filth. A dirty mirror is one of the ugliest sights. James is using popular language, to be sure, and is not to be held to the terminology of science. But scientists themselves hardly know how to use language accurately, since radium is found to break down the lines between metals and transmutation actually occurs like the alchemy of the ancients.

In James 3:8 this word for "rust" is used for poison. At any rate, decay rests on all mortal things. It is not necessary to wait for the Day of the Lord to see this fact. "Their rust shall be for a testimony against you." There will be no escape from this telltale rust which, like gray hairs, betrays age and the approach of death. "And shall eat your flesh as fire." Westcott and Hort place "as fire" with the next sentence. Either punctuation makes good sense, but it is a bolder figure used as mentioned, for nothing eats up what it seizes upon more rapidly or completely than fire. Feeding the flames of a furnace, as a stoker in a great ship, is one of the most exhaustive of all tasks. Fire licks up all in its reach and will gut modern fireproof buildings (iron and concrete) when once it gets started. The plural here emphasizes the completeness of the work of destruction.

"Ye have laid up your treasure in the last days." These wicked rich have heaped up treasure like a thesaurus and in the end of the day have seen it turn to dust and ashes, crumbling between their fingers. There is no vault on earth secure against moth, rust, and thieves (Matt. 6:19). Those who set their hearts upon the wealth of earth are bound to come to grief. Pitiful is the state of the man "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). The only wealth that lasts is riches toward God, and this is open to us all. The only wise use of money is in making friends who will welcome us (Luke 16:9) into the eternal tabernacles. The mammon of unrighteousness may be so employed. If it is not, one will find that he has simply treasured up wrath against the day of wrath, to be paid at last with compound interest (Rom. 2:5).

Wronged Workers (5:4)

The God of all the earth will do right. He is not deaf to the cries of those oppressed millions in the ages whose pite-

ous appeals for elemental justice come to him. This is a terrible indictment of Jewish capitalists who withheld the meager wages of the men who gathered the harvests. "Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out." The hire of the laborers reminds one of the proverb, "The laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7; 1 Tim. 5:18). The word for "hire" occurs sometimes in the sense of reward (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:8, 14), but the original idea is that of pay for work done (e.g., Matt. 20:8), and so here.

The word for laborer means any kind of workman, but it is common in the New Testament for agricultural workers. "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few" (Matt. 9:37). When the work is done, it is only simple justice for the workman to receive his pay, for the hungry mouths at home have to be filled.

In the Old Testament the cause of the workman was guarded with special care: "Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates: in his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it . . . lest he cry against thee unto Jehovah, and it be sin unto thee" (Deut. 24:14 f.). See also Malachi 3:5: "I will be a swift witness against . . . those that oppress the hireling in his wages." Tobit charges his son Tobias, "Let not the wages of any man, which hath wrought for thee, tarry with thee, but give him it out of hand" (Tobit 4:14). Sirach (34:21 f.) says, "The bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood. He that taketh away his neighbor's living slayeth him; and he that defraudeth a laborer of his hire is a bloodshedder." Certainly, therefore, the Jews were not without explicit teaching on this vital point of elemental social justice.

And yet these men "who mowed" (literally, "heap to-

gether") [2] their fields had the sad experience of not receiving the wages, "of you kept back by fraud, comes too late from you" (Mayor). The word means to "fall short," "be too late." [3]

The honest laborers who form the foundation of our industrial system are not to be treated as beggars or hobos. They are not subjects for charity. They are the human element in the industrial problem. Blood is thicker than water and is more valuable than gold. The horror of war is that it treats men as fodder for cannon, regardless of the result to the man or those dependent on him.

This stolen pay "cries out" and ought to cry out, whether the hire is kept back after the work is done or whether the employer purposely squeezes the laborer down to starvation wages in order to make more money for himself. There is a just balance to be struck by which both capital and labor may receive fair remuneration. "The cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

"The cries of the harvesters" (Moffatt) are musical when they sing together as they work, content with their wages and joyous in their work. But the cries here heard are of a very different sort. They are the angry, resentful outcries of men who have been wronged in their very souls by those who should have been their protectors and friends, those for whom the harvesters have worked. These men cry to heaven, and they ought to do so. Mayor notes four sins that cry to heaven: a brother's blood (Gen. 4:10), the sin of Sodom (Gen. 18:20), the oppressed hireling (Deut. 24:15), and the cry of Job for justice (Job 16:18 f.). But men ought to hear the cry of the laborers before they become too clam-

[2] At harvest time there is always special demand for laborers at higher wages than usual, to save the ripe grain before it perishes.

[3] Note Heb. 4:1. The word occurs in the papyri for "a bath insufficiently warmed."

orous. It is only right that social injustice should be rectified here and now and the transgressors punished.

The social test of modern Christianity is to do justice to the laboring men without doing injustice to the capitalists. The conditions of life must be made easier. If corporations have no souls, the men who toil at the forge have. Men are entitled to a bit of heaven here and now at their own hearth and home. Somehow, many of the laborers have come to feel that the churches do not sympathize with the struggles of the laboring classes to better their hard lot but fawn upon the very rich who sometimes grind the toilers to the earth. It is easy to be extreme and unjust to one side or the other. The main thing is to be faithful to God and man, to man as man. The poorest of men is worth more than a sheep, yes, than gold and silver. The soul is without price, and the soul dwells in the body. We must shake the shackles free from men and women who cry out to God. The Lord God of Sabaoth has heard their cries and will punish the offenders in due time, but that fact does not absolve us from our present duty in the midst of conditions that call for action. Wronged workers have a right to a hearing at the bar of public opinion. They will cry on until they are heard.

The Wanton Use of Money (*5:5 f.*)

Evidently James is all ablaze as he faces the situation of his readers. These Jewish plutocrats, some of them shysters, have made their money out of the blood and sweat of the toiling poor. And then they spend it in a way to anger the wronged workers still more. They live in the most luxurious extravagance and waste of money while the cold, half-naked, hungry toilers who made the wealth go unpaid. It is no wonder that such laborers grow bitter at heart. It is a vivid and even ghastly picture of the wicked rich who revel at the cost of human happiness, who with careless indifference shut

their eyes to the misery all around them due to their own injustice. Christianity endeavors to make this cold cynicism impossible, to persuade to be just and, if need be, go the second mile in eagerness to help rather than to hang back and higgle over the first.

"Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure, ye have revelled on earth and plunged into dissipation" (Moffatt). The sound of revelry by night has no melody to the ears of the man whose wife and children are starving because he does not get a square deal from his employer. In Hermas (*Sim.* 7. 1) both of these verbs are used together ("reminiscence of this passage," Mayor) of those who gave themselves up to the lusts of the world. See also 1 Timothy 5:6: "She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." One is reminded of the picture of the beggar Lazarus who lay at the rich man's gate while the man feasted within. The conditions will be reversed in heaven if the poor are Christians and the rich man is unsaved (Luke 16:25). That hope is not to be despised, but James is not content to spare the rich now while they inflict such wrongs on men whom they employ.

"Ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter." We have here a hard phrase to understand. Homer uses the verb meaning to turn milk into cheese (*Od.* ix. 246). But we cannot feel sure (cf. Luke 21:34). And what is "the day of slaughter"? Moffatt boldly renders it thus: "You have fattened yourselves as for the Day of Slaughter." That is at least comprehensible. At any rate, when Jerusalem was destroyed, the Romans slew the rich Jews indiscriminately, whether they remained in the city or flew in despair to the Romans who were bent on plunder (cf. Josephus, *War*, v. 10, 2). The pious poor in all the ages have suffered at the hands of the rich and the mighty. Even in America religious liberty came as the result of fierce struggle. Political freedom was bought

with the price of blood. Economic justice will be won only by tears and blood.

The very limit is reached. "Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one; he doth not resist you." Many take these words to refer to the death of Jesus as the culmination of iniquity, when the rich Pharisees and Sadducees obtained the death of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth. In these words Peter charged that the Jews had been guilty of Christ's death: "But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:14 f.).

Certainly the application to Jesus has a deal of verisimilitude. Stephen used similar language: "And they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). "The Righteous One" is thus seen to be one of the titles given Jesus by the early disciples. There is no reason why James should not have referred to the death of Jesus in those words.

But the book of Wisdom has similar language about the righteous poor who are oppressed by the wicked rich, and the parallel is so clear that probably James refers directly to it. See Wisdom 2:10 ff.: "Let us oppress the poor righteous man; let us not spare the widow, nor reverence the ancient grey hairs of the aged. . . . Let us lie in wait for the righteous; because he is not for our turn, and he is clear contrary to our doings; he upbraideth us with our offending the law." It was so in the days of the prophets. Hear Amos (2:6 f.) as he thunders against the evils of his day: "They have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes—they that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor" (surely the most greedy of men for real estate, if they even seek that on top of the head of the poor!). The picture is one of the oppression of the good man who is un-

resisting and allows himself to be robbed. The horrors of war to helpless women and children come before us.

It is curious that in the legendary account [4] of the death of James, who was later called also "the Just," we are told that the Jews ran upon James, crying, "Oh! oh! even the righteous one." One of the priests vainly cried out: "Stop! What are you doing? The righteous one is praying for you." According to this story, James himself finally met the very fate of those unfortunate victims of Jewish greed and hate, of whom Jesus is the chief illustration. Progress in behalf of human rights is won only by slow advances here and there. But in the end of the day the cause wins. The stars in their courses fight against Sisera and all the enemies of man and God.

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[4] Eusebius, H. E. ii. 23 (taken from Hegesippus).

XII

Perseverance and Prayer

The purpose of James in writing his epistle comes out clearly in 5:7–20. He wishes to hearten the Jewish Christians in the midst of their trials as well as to make a protest against the oppressions to which they were subjected. "The storm of indignation is past, and from this point to the end of the Epistle St. James writes in tones of tenderness and affection" (Plummer). He has denounced the persecutors and now turns to the brethren who are under the heel of the money devil.

Patience till the Parousia (*5:7 f.*)

"Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord." Moffatt has it "till the arrival of the Lord." The example of the righteous man, whether Christ or the typical righteous poor man, argues strongly for longsuffering ("long-tempered" like our "sweet-tempered," "quick-tempered," and the opposite of "short-tempered," according to Mayor). In the Christian race one cannot afford to be short of wind. He has a long run and must hold out until the goal is reached (cf. Heb. 12:1–3).

One is reminded of the opening note of the Epistle of James (1:2–4), where he urged joy in the midst of varied trials. The wicked rich deserve all the fierce denunciation that James has just bestowed and all the penalty that God will inflict, but the suffering Christians must not engage in mere

recrimination. James does not discourage protest against wrong or the effort to remove evil. But there is a residuum of suffering and pain in the cup of all of us. When all else is done, in the end of the day we must drink that cup. Let us do it with the spirit of soldiers who fall in the trenches at the post of duty. It is better to do it without flinching and without making a wry face. God is full of long-suffering toward us (Rom. 2:4; 1 Peter 3:20), and men have shown the same spirit (James 5:10; 2 Cor. 6:6). The patience in James 1:3 f. is just "remaining under," but here the point is to do it and make no fuss about it, not to call attention to what one is suffering, to be a martyr without insisting on being recognized as one.

The early Christians were so eager for the second coming of the Lord Jesus that they were impatient for his return and some of them completely upset about it, although Jesus had emphasized the utter uncertainty of the time and had urged watchfulness and readiness. By a skilful turn (Plummer) James "makes the unconscious impatience of primitive Christianity a basis for his exhortation to conscious patience."

Some of them no longer had a taste for the slow work of plowing, sowing, and reaping, forgetting what Jesus had said of the gradual growth of the kingdom of God from seed to harvest. So James, probably with the words of Jesus in mind, says, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth." The farmer, tiller of the soil, has much to discourage him in the making and selling of his crops. The soil has to be kept up to its level of fertility and must be properly prepared. The seed must be of good quality and has to be sown at the proper season. The weeds will come, and the harvest is dependent on the sun and the rain. He cannot hasten the process. When he has done the most scientific farming, he can only wait in expectancy. Often, perhaps daily, the farmer watches the growth of the

grain, "being patient over it," bending over it as a fond father. He knows that he cannot hasten the season. The early rain made possible the sowing of the seed. The latter rain will make possible a harvest. Meanwhile, he can do nothing but wait "until it receive" the final touch from God's hand. By force of circumstances the farmer has to exercise long-suffering toward his crop of wheat.

"Be ye also patient." James applies his illustration with directness and power. "Ye also," as well as the husbandman. He does it, for nature has taught him her secrets. "Ye" should do so, for Jesus has shown you the way. "Establish your hearts." Peter is charged with just this task when he has turned (Luke 22:32). God strengthens us (1 Peter 5:10; 1 Thess. 3:13), but we must do our share. "For the coming of the Lord is at hand."

The phrase "is at hand" is the one that John the Baptist used of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven which had come right upon them (Matt. 3:2). So Peter (1 Peter 4:7) says, "The end of all things is at hand." Paul (Phil. 4:5) says, "The Lord is at hand." There is no doubt that the early Christians hoped that Jesus would come back quickly and thus relieve them from the ills of an impossible social system (Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 4:15; 1 John 2:18). But they did not at all feel sure that Jesus was coming right away (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 3:1 ff.; 2 Cor. 5:1–10; Phil. 1:21–23).

When 2 Peter was written, scoffers were already asking, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter 3:4). The answer is given that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Back to their tasks they must go, back to the building up of the kingdom of God in the midst of a world of woe and sin, on with the conflict till Jesus comes, on with the long siege against human greed and inhumanity to man. Patience is the word—patience and prayer, pluck and praise, power and peace in the end.

Folly of Recrimination (5:9)

If things do not go to suit us, the natural way is to blame somebody else for what has befallen us. We generally exculpate ourselves from all responsibility. A naïve illustration of this propensity is found in John 12:19: "Behold how ye prevail nothing; lo, the world is gone after him." At the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem the Pharisees, thinking that their cause against Jesus was lost, turned and blamed each other for the outcome. So then "murmur not, brethren, one against another." Literally it is, "groan not, brothers, against one another." See Romans 8:23: "We ourselves groan within ourselves." It is the inward and unexpressed feeling rather than the outward expression of dissatisfaction (cf. James 4:11).

The secret grudge is taken out in groans and murmurs. In Mark 7:34 Jesus is said to have groaned as he looked up to heaven and prayed, perhaps out of sheer weariness at the burden of sin and sorrow that was upon him. It is hard to be content and to smother resentment at known or suspected wrong. The suppressed volcano may easily break out into a violent eruption. "Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied" (Psalm 59:15, AV). The murmur of a mob is often senseless, and in all events we must bear in mind that we bring down condemnation on our own heads.

"That ye be not judged," says James. He recurs to this point in 5:12. Probably the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1 are recalled by James. "Behold, the judge standeth before the door." He will hear all complaints and set everything right. The picture appears to be that in the Mishnah (*Ab.* iv. 16): "This world is as if it were a vestibule to the future world; prepare thyself in the vestibule, that thou mayest enter the reception room." Jesus is the Judge who stands at the door

through which all must pass. The conception is eschatological and apocalyptic. See Matthew 24:33: "Know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors." In Revelation 3:20 Jesus is represented as saying: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Let him in now, that you and he may sup together. Let him in now, else you may stand before him hereafter as culprit and helpless and hopeless. "Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way" (Psalm 2:12). Treat kindly one another so that you will not need the Son to act as Judge between you.

Examples of Patience (5:10 f.)

James, like a practical preacher, loves to illustrate his points. He has a fitting one at hand in "the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord." They spoke in the name, with the authority and with the power of the Lord. The idiom is common enough in the Septuagint and, indeed, in the papyri.[1] They spoke as the representatives of Jehovah. Mayor seems a bit perplexed over the failure of James to mention Jesus as the supreme example of suffering, as is done by Peter (1 Peter 2:21), who spoke of Christ's leaving us an example, by Paul (Phil. 2:5–11), and by the author of Hebrews (12:1–5).

Perhaps James may have thought it was particularly pertinent for these Jewish Christians to be reminded of the prophets as an "example of suffering and of patience." Certainly they endured evil in abundance and had great need of long-suffering. It was common enough to appeal to them for this purpose. Jesus did it with keenest irony at the mock heroic monuments built later to the memory of the martyred prophets (Matt. 5:12; 23:34, 37). Stephen did it with so

[1] Deissmann, *Bible Studies: Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), p. 198.

sharp a tongue that the Sanhedrin stoned him to death for his courage and proved the truth of his words by their own acts (Acts 7:52). Elijah says to Jehovah, "The children of Israel have . . . slain thy prophets with the sword" (1 Kings 19:10, 14). Jeremiah says also, "Your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion" (2:30). As patterns of patience take Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. These illustrate in various ways the patience of which the readers of the Epistle of James stand in sore need.

"Behold, we call them blessed that endured." He had already done that in James 1:12. Jesus had promised salvation to the one who endured to the end (Matt. 24:13). Men usually felicitate the survivors of a catastrophe. Often they become popular heroes.

In particular, "ye have heard of the patience of Job." Job was the most frequently quoted instance in Old Testament times and is a perfectly obvious one for James. And yet Job did have passionate outbursts of indignation at the gibes and superfluous advice of his tormenting friends, and even of his wife, when God seemed to have deserted him. But it must be remembered that Job did not curse God and die. He waited for God to speak and make it all plain. Job hardly exhibited long-suffering, but he clearly did show patience. He was not exactly meek, but he revealed the endurance of a sensitive man. Although Job is the most famous instance of patience in the Old Testament, yet he is nowhere else cited as such in the New Testament. We need not discuss the question whether Job is parable or fact, as the point is here precisely the same.

Ye "have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful." The outcome in the case of Job proves the point. It turned out all right with Job. So he illustrates the pity and mercy of the Lord; "the end of the

Lord" is seen in the conclusion, like a novel that turns out happily at last. In the midst of the stress and storm of Job's life and his violent outbursts of emotion and exalted feeling God is sympathetic and compassionate. God has understood Job and watched his endurance all the while. The story is so well known that James does not have to tell it but can depend upon his readers to see the point of the illustration.

Profanity (*5:12*)

This little paragraph seems to come in rather abruptly, with no connection with what precedes. As a result, Oesterley regards it as "a fragment of a larger piece" which James here tears from its context, perhaps a saying from Jesus. But Plummer is more likely correct in thinking of it as an appendix after rounding out the epistle, coming back to the blessedness of trial, with which topic the epistle opens.

The exhortations need not have a close connection with each other. As a matter of fact, James has spoken more against the sins of speech than any other single sin. Plummer well says, "He has spoken against talkativeness, unrestrained speaking, love of correcting others, railing, cursing, boasting, murmuring" (see 1:19, 26; 3:1–12; 4:11, 13; 5:9). He now recurs to the sins of speech to say a few words against one of the commonest evils of which he has not spoken specifically. He evidently is thinking of the words of Jesus as we have them in Matthew 5:34–37, though it is not an exact quotation.[2] He may, indeed, as Resch holds, give another version of the same logion (cf. 2 Cor. 1:17). But there was ample ground for this prohibition, as the Jews had learned how to split hairs on the subject of profanity.

[2] Plummer notes that the Epistle of James shows more coincidences with the words of Jesus than all of Paul's epistles and that all of them deal with the morality of the gospel, with conduct and life. This is all as the circumstances would lead us to expect.

The Third Commandment was plain enough on the subject, and it was supported by the Pharisees and the Essenes. The Essenes, indeed, opposed all oaths, even before courts, and were said to have been excused by Herod from taking the oath of allegiance (Jos., *Ant.* xv. 10.4). And yet, as Mayor notes, this is not consistent with the oath of initiation which the Essenes took (Jos., *War* ii. 8. 7). The Jewish view is well represented by Sirach 23:7–11 and by Philo (M. 2, p. 184).

The early Christians found trouble with this verse of James, as with the words of Jesus on the same point. See the list of quotations from the early writers in Mayor. Augustine sees no harm in oaths before courts if it were not for the danger of committing perjury. And yet it may be seriously questioned if Jesus or James is thinking of oaths in courts of justice, since Jesus himself did not refuse to answer when put on oath by the high priest before the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26: 63 f.). Besides, solemn asseveration is allowed in the Old Testament (Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Isa. 65:16). It is far more likely the flippant use of oaths (profanity) that is here condemned. There were, and are still, all sorts of devices by which more or less pious people feel justified in calling on the name of the Lord in ordinary speech. It is today one of the saddest things in life to note how common profanity is in the ordinary speech of men and of boys, mannish boys who imitate the men about them. It is positively disheartening to hear it on the streets, in the streetcars, in the trains.

If one is puzzled, as was Augustine, over the words "above all things," on the ground that profanity is not worse than adultery and murder, we may take it either as a kind of hyperbole (as did Augustine) or as a sort of elative superlative (not literally *before* all but only very important), as limited to the forms of impatience in the preceding context, like 1 Peter 4:8, where the same idiom occurs (Mayor). But if the strict interpretation be insisted on, one has only to

consider what the sin of profanity really is. It is a blasphemous use of the name of the Most High God. The fact that it is usually done without thinking mitigates the offense, but sometimes the full bitterness of profanity is meant. Few things are worse than sulfurous speech like the very fumes of hell. For my part, I should not press the words "above all things" too far in this context.

"Swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath." [3] Certainly this is plain enough to be understood. It is conclusive and inclusive and leaves no room for the milder forms of profanity for which Christians sometimes excuse themselves. "But let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay;" "let your 'yes' be a plain 'yes,' your 'no' a plain 'no'" (Moffatt)—this, and nothing more. But there is the trouble. The need for emphasis and the love of strong assertion lead a person so easily to go beyond the bounds of good taste and decency. Edersheim (i. p. 583) has a Midrash quotation: "The good man's yea is yea, and his nay nay."

In calmer moments one knows that the value of his statement rests essentially on his own character for veracity. His mere word is enough and, in truth, all that one can offer. Violent expletives throw discredit on a person's ordinary statements and suspicion on the one that he seeks to bolster up with artificial means. Profanity is one of the worst and most useless of sins. It brings good to none and harm to all, in particular to the one who uses it. "That ye fall not under judgment." The Judge is at the door (James 5:9), and there is no escape.

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[3] The use of the present imperative in prohibition rather than the aorist subjunctive implies that the thing was being done. That is probably true, for church members have been known to be guilty of this sin. However, it is possible for this tense to prohibit the habit rather than the single act. "Keep on not swearing." See Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, op. cit.*, pp. 851–54.

Worship and Excitement (*5:13*)

Plummer has a very keen and pertinent heading for his chapter on this verse, and it is noteworthy that he devotes an entire chapter to this one verse, a verse that is little understood by most interpreters. His heading is this: "Worship the Best Outlet and Remedy for Excitement. The Connection between Worship and Conduct." Certainly oaths are not the way to express one's emotions, whether one be angry or merely excited, least of all when one has the miserable habit of profanity and is unaware of his foul speech. And yet it is not wrong to express one's feelings. There is no merit in the self-repression of the cynic or the stoic. "Let the expression of strongly excited feelings be an act of worship" (Plummer). This is an intensely practical point.

"Is any among you suffering?" And what church or community does not have one or more of these occasional or chronic sufferers? The word has a wider meaning than mere bodily sickness. Paul uses it for suffering hardship as a good soldier (2 Tim. 2:3, 9; 4:5). It includes any kind of ill of body or mind. It means, literally, having hard experiences, and it refers to natural depression as a result of such misfortunes. The remedy is not in despondency or in suicide. The remedy lies in prayer. "Let him pray," let him pray as a habit (present tense of durative action). Prayer is a blessing to the heart and to the mental life. It is good to talk with God. The worry disappears in God's presence and often the very ill itself disappears. But if it does not go, he gives grace sufficient to bear the burden. So then prayer is the proper outlet for the depressed Christian.

Here lies one of the great blessings of public worship in the house of God. The tired soul finds rest in prayer in the house of prayer. There is comfort in secret prayer and in family worship, but the man makes a tremendous psychological

blunder who cuts himself off from the spiritual tonic of the public worship of God. Those in charge of that worship should never fail to have in mind such persons who come to church seeking comfort and strength.

But some hearts are overjoyed and feel like giving expression to their joy in unusual ways, almost in ecstasy. "Is any cheerful?" There are many in happy mood, in good spirits or "good cheer" (cf. Acts 27:22, 25). These are in good health of soul and perhaps also of body. "Let him sing praise." The word originally meant to play on a stringed instrument (Sir. 9:4), but it comes to be used also for singing with the voice and the heart (Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 14:15), making melody with the heart to the Lord.

There is a wondrous exaltation of soul in the public praise of God. The combination of instruments and of voice enables the soul of man to pour itself out toward God in richness of praise. This is far better than the reckless, unrestrained ecstasy of overwrought emotionalism. Plummer notes properly that there is no merit or demerit per se in excitement. The wild dervish commands only astonishment, not sympathy. Religious excitement may become the occasion of bringing discredit upon Christianity, even when it represents real fervor and an element of worship. The spirit of man cannot always be restrained. Under the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield the audiences were sometimes carried to excesses of emotion. But far better this than the deadness and coldness of mere formalism. Revivals occasionally have been marked by such excesses, like the "Jerks" in Kentucky one hundred and fifty years ago when, however, real change of life took place.

There is wisdom in the words of James here. Let the religious emotions find expression in prayer and praise. The effect is not only good for the moment but is good for conduct and life as a whole. If we could only manage somehow

to turn some of the energy that goes into our activities into religious worship, certainly the effect would be more wholesome all around. People cannot help a measure of excitement. Some of it is good for them. There is tonic in communion with God, tonic for soul and body.

God and Medicine (5:14–18)

Few subjects have excited more interest in recent years than the subject here presented. So many subsidiary issues are raised that it is difficult to treat the question adequately in a few pages.

Many varieties of "faith cures" have been before the world. The so-called Christian Science movement is now the most prominent of them all, combining an idealistic philosophy and pantheistic religion. This combination takes up various aspects of Buddhism, Gnosticism, and a dash of Christian verbiage with the vital elements of Christianity gone, and uses some of the well-known ideas of modern psychology as to the influence of the mind on the body. As a whole, it is a hopeless jumble of absurdities and inconsistencies and is hostile to the worship of Jesus. It leads astray a certain type of mind without clear reasoning processes and fattens on the fees for mental healing, a portion of which goes to the mother church in Boston. There is only the most superficial parallel between what James here describes and what the Christian Science "healer" practices.

There is in James an absence of all mercenary ideas. There is no "commercialized use of prayer," to use the legal phrase of one of the New York courts. There is also the use of olive oil, the best medicine known to the ancient world and still one of the best remedial agencies, whether used internally or externally. The disciples of Jesus on their tour of Galilee had the double ministry of preaching and healing (Matt. 10:7 f.), and they anointed the sick with oil (Mark 6:13).

In Isaiah 1:6 the prophet says that the bruises were "neither bound up, neither mollified with oil." So the good Samaritan bound up the wounds of the poor victim of the robbers and poured oil and wine upon him (Luke 10:34).

A number of questions come bristling for discussion as we proceed with this passage in James. The use of the word "church" rather than synagogue, as in 2:2, is to be observed. The local church undoubtedly had a close kinship to the Jewish synagogue in origin and worship. The very phrase "elders of the church" occurs also in Acts 20:17 and in the plural, like bishops at Philippi (Phil. 1:1). There was a council of elders in the synagogue (Luke 7:3), and the word appears in an official sense in the Egyptian papyri.[4]

But a more vital question for our subject is whether these elders come in an official capacity to perform an ecclesiastical "anointing" with oil or whether they come to pray as brothers in Christ and rub with the olive oil (cf. Isa. 1:6) as medicine. Mayor quotes Philo (*Sonm,* M. i. 666), Pliny (N. H. xxiii. 34–50), and Galen (*Med. Temp.,* book ii) in praise of oil as a medicine. In Herod's last illness a bath of oil was recommended to him (Jos., *War* i. 33, 5).

There is, therefore, no doubt as to the ancient opinion about, and use of, oil as a medicine. It is probable that each one will decide this question according to his predilections. For my own part, I incline to the view that we have here not a sacramental or priestly function on the part of these elders but the double duty of ministry of the word and of medicine (with prayer). The nearest parallel in modern life is the medical missionary, who goes with the word of life and the healing balm of modern science. He heals the sick with the physician's skill and the prayer of faith. Paul helped the

[4] Deissmann, *Bible Studies: Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions, op. cit.,* pp. 154 f., 233 f.

sick (Acts 20:35) at Ephesus and often healed the sick, and yet he worked side by side with Luke, the beloved physician, as in the island of Melita (Acts 28:8 f.).

There is certainly no indication that what is called "extreme unction" was practiced or urged by James and the apostolic Christians. That was a later development in Greek and Roman Catholic churches that is foreign to the tone of this epistle. There is here no such superstition as sending for a minister when death is at hand to perform a magical ritual ceremony to stave off death. Mayor has a full statement of the chief facts about the sacrament of unction in later centuries. He suggests that the cases of the failure of the simple use of oil as a medicine probably led finally to the special consecration of the oil or the use of relics. But in James we seem to have not a ceremony or ecclesiastical function but rather the simple use of oil as a medicine and prayer "in the name of the Lord."

Today we have a more advanced medical science which is, however, by no means final and infallible. We separate the functions of the minister and the physician. We prefer the doctor to the oil, but we still need God with the doctor. It is a great error for one to think that God is not to be called upon because we have a skilled physician. The minister still has a place, and a very important place, in the problem of therapeutics, particularly in those many cases of a more or less nervous type when the influence of the mind on the body is very pronounced. Often in the most severe illness the deciding factor is not medicine but hope, as any doctor will say. The minister should make friends with the physician and be at his service and co-operate with him. The minister needs to be careful to be a help and not a hindrance in cases of sickness. He should be a sedative and an inspiration to the patient, not an irritant or an excitant. It is a just ground of complaint that physicians have against those preachers who

lend themselves to the schemes of quack doctors with patent medicines for all sorts of ills.

But coming back to the use of prayer, James says, "And the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." The credit is here given to prayer and the power of God. One is not to infer that James gives no credit to medicine. The oil was good; God works through medicine and without medicine. The best that we still know on this subject is this: prayer and medicine, or God and the doctor. The promise of James may be compared with those of Jesus in Mark 11:24 and John 14:14. But the very essence of prayer is acquiescence with us. By "save" here James means "cure," as it often does in the Gospels (Mark 5:23; 6:56; 8:35).

The prayer of faith is the only kind that is real prayer, and it is trust in God with full acknowledgment of God's power and love. Some men have always had the idea of a God so aloof from the world that he cares nothing about it or is powerless to help. There is nothing in modern scientific knowledge inconsistent with an immanent, yet transcendent, God who holds the key of life in himself. The wondrous laws of nature are all of God, and there are many more that we do not yet understand. Science has vastly increased our sense of wonder about God and his world. We have only skirted the fringes of knowledge. It is idle to say that God, if he really sent his Son to redeem men from sin and all earthly woe, does not care if we suffer in body and mind. The Father's hand rests upon us all. He can be reached. He is not far from any of us, and he loves us.

"And if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him," not by being healed in body nor because he is healed of his sickness. The two things do not correspond, nor does one follow because of the other. What James means, undoubtedly, is that the cured man, convicted of his sins and out of

gratitude to God for his goodness, repents of his sins and is forgiven.

This is what should always happen in such cases, but often it occurs that men who profess repentance on a bed of sickness forget it when they get up. This is sheer ingratitude and a horrible outcome. But certainly if the sick man is a sinner, he should be prayed for. It is the time of opportunity to get him to listen to the voice of God. No undue advantage need be taken of one's situation, and yet it is wise to speak plainly then. Sickness is a great leveler and brings us all down. Beyond any doubt, Roman Catholics have made good use of their asylums and hospitals. Other denominations are beginning to take a real interest in this aspect of Christian activity. In the hour of sickness it is a great mercy to fall into the hands of those who love God and where the love of Jesus is mingled with the highest medical science.

During sickness is a good time to confess our sins to one another as well as to God. "Confess therefore your sins one to another." Clearly if the sick man, conscious now of his own weakness, is not willing to confess his sins against others, God will not forgive him.

As Mayor points out, James expands the words of Jesus about forgiving those who have trespassed against us (Matt. 5:23 f.; 6:14), so as to bring out both sides of the subject. Let the sick man ask forgiveness of those whom he has wronged. Then let them forgive him and pray for him. "Pray one for another." The Roman Catholics—Bellarmine, for instance—sometimes appeal to this passage as a justification for auricular confession to the priest; but Luther has a pointed answer: "A strange confessor. His name is 'One Another.'" Cajetan "speaks the language of common sense" (Mayor) and admits that James has no such custom in mind. What James urges is public confession, in particular to those wronged, not private and secret confession to a priest.

The Roman Catholic confessional is one of the most dangerous of ecclesiastical institutions. It puts untold power for harm into the hands of the priest. It is difficult to conceive how a husband or father could be willing for wife or daughter to make secret confession to a priest. The abuses of the confessional make a horrible chapter in human history. Not merely are things wrung out that should not be told, but evil is suggested that would never be thought of. The original form of absolution was "precatory rather than declaratory" (Plummer).

But it is a great good to the soul to open the heart and make a frank confession to the church or to the persons who have been injured. Great sorrow would be avoided if men would only have the manhood to do this thing. Tertullian (On Penance viii) well says, "Confession of sins lightens as much as concealment aggravates them." Confession of sin was one of the cardinal tenets in the preaching of John the Baptist. The Romanists demanded penance for sins publicly confessed, and private enmity (Plummer) took advantage of it for purposes of revenge.

Then it is a good time to pray "that ye may be healed." Then the power of God is with men to heal both soul and body. Many a revival has started in a church because those who have been estranged have buried the hatchet and seen eye to eye again. There is power in prayer when the soul is open to God, as can be true only when hate disappears from the heart. "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working," "the prayers of the righteous have a powerful effect" (Moffatt).

This short sentence is clearer in the Greek than in any of the English renderings. Plummer suggests, "Great is the strength of a righteous man's supplication, in its earnestness." The word for "supplication" is more specific than the usual term and suggests a sense of need. But the crucial word is

the participle, which may be either middle or passive.[5] Our word "energetic" is derived from the verbal adjective. The notion of energy is present, at any rate. The great word in modern science is this very word "energy," which is made luminous by electricity and radium. The only prayer worthwhile is one with energy in it, whether inwrought (taking the participle as passive) by the Spirit of God or at work (middle voice) through the spiritual passion of the man's own soul. Such a prayer has much force in it and is not a mere ceremony or rattle of meaningless words.

The emphasis on "a righteous man" here does not mean that God will not hear the cry of a sinner for mercy but probably that a righteous man is more likely to put the proper energy into his prayer. We may reflect sadly that our prayers often have no power with God because they have no energy when said. There is no power in the dynamo; the engine has gone dead; the steam is not high enough to move the driving wheel. Oesterley quotes aptly the words of Rabbi Ben Zakkai in *Berachoth,* 34*b,* when prayers for a sick child are desired: "Although I am greater in learning than Chaninah, he is more efficacious in prayer; I am indeed the Prince, but he is the Steward who has constant access to the King." They have it because they live close to God. With a great price they have won this high prerogative. Ofttimes they are the humblest of men in earthly station and store. Very mechanical, surely, is the idea of Rabbi Isaac (*Jebamoth,* 64*a*), who says: "The prayer of the righteous is comparable to a pitchfork; as the pitchfork changes the position of the wheat so the prayer changes the disposition of God from wrath to mercy."

James has a typical case to illustrate his point. "Elijah was

[5] See extensive discussion in Mayor. The New Testament usage favors the middle, but the passive is also in use, and either makes good sense.

a man of like passions with us," "with a nature just like our own" (Moffatt). James emphasizes the human frailties of Elijah to show that he does not refer to ceremonial or sacramental rites when he urges prayer for the sick. Such prayer is the privilege not merely of the elders of the church but of any good man who has the ear of God. That power is not a function of ecclesiastical position but the reward of holy living and trust in God. Elijah had his weaknesses as we all have, but God heard him. The point for us is that if God heard Elijah, he will hear any of us who puts the same amount of spiritual energy into his prayer. "He prayed fervently." There is no use to pray in any other way. Elijah prayed seven times before the rain came. Halfhearted prayer defeats itself (cf. doubting prayer in 1:6 ff.).

Many modern men have no faith in prayer of any kind save as a wholesome reaction on the mind of the one who prays. They scout the idea that the God of the universe would condescend to listen to the feeble chatter of such worms in the dust as men. They conceive it as impossible that God would alter his will in any particular because of such insignificant requests. Least of all do they admit the possibility that God would change the weather in response to the prayer of one or many individuals. They argue that the laws of the weather are fixed by the laws of nature and that God does not alter his own laws. A very pretty network of impossibilities is fixed up, but all the same, the experience of Christians breaks right through these entanglements.

A real God is greater than his own laws, and his own will is the chief law of his nature. God is not an absentee God; he is our Father and loves for us to tell him our troubles. Certainly God knows how to work his own laws. We do not have to think that Elijah had the matter of drought and rain in his own hands at his beck and call. Far from it. Elijah won by strenuous prayer and perseverance, not by lightly

informing God of his wishes. Besides, when rain came in response to the prayer of Elijah, it came out of clouds, as rain always does. God made the clouds gather from the west (the Mediterranean) till the rain came. As the hot winds from the east and the south brought the drought, so the west winds brought rain. Many times in my own experience I have known people to pray for rain, and the rain came. The rain may not have come in response to the prayer; that I do not know. But it came the very night in which prayer was made for it at the prayer meeting. The difficulty in the matter of rain is no greater than in cases of sickness. The root of the trouble is the lack of trust in God, the broken relation with God, the loss of power with him.

Rescue Work or Restoring the Erring (5:19 f.)

James makes a last appeal to his readers, and it has a touch of tenderness—"My brethren." In verse 5 he spoke of the case of a sick man who is brought to confess his sins and is led to God. Here he seems to refer specifically to the case of a brother who has fallen into error. There are such sad instances that puzzle many a pastor by their indifference, hardness, and even scorn of Christ. "If any among you err from the truth, and one convert him."

The condition (third class) is put delicately only as a supposed case, not assumed as true and yet probable, alas. "Err" is from the Latin *errare* (to wander, to go astray). The Greek word here suggests the picture of one who is lost in the mountains, who has missed his path,[6] without passing on the question of his own part in the process. That is now neither here nor there, for he is lost. Our "planet" is this

[6] The passive voice does not have its technical force here as in Rev. 18:23 but rather is more like the middle in sense as in Deut. 22:1 and probably (Mayor) in Luke 21:8; 2 Peter 2:15. The passive is constantly making inroads on the middle in Koine Greek.

word, from the notion that these luminaries were wandering stars, not fixed like the rest. We now know that none of the stars are fixed, but they all move with great speed.

Whatever the cause, it is not impossible for brethren to go astray "from the truth." One way to treat them is to kick them out of the way, down the hill. Another way is to go after them with hammer and tongs to beat them back into the path. Another course is to give them up in disgust and to wash our hands of all responsibility. It must be confessed that often it is very hard to do anything else, since brethren act with so much independence and resent any effort to show them a better way. When they start away, often they go the whole way. But there is a more excellent way—the way of love. See 1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 6:1 ff.

We are our brothers' keepers in spite of all they say and all that we may feel. You that are spiritual have a call to mind the broken lives all about you. There is no nobler work than this rescue work, to turn a sinner "from the error of his way." It is so hard to get a man back on the right track. He, like all lost men, wanders round and round in his old tracks of sin and error. He is the victim of his own logical fallacies and sinful delusions. Though a giant, he is bound by the cords of the Lilliputians, the bonds of habit which he does not break.

It is enough to discourage any social worker in the slums or in the tenement districts of our cities to see the hopeless conditions in which the victims live. Drugs have fastened some with clamps of steel; drink has fired the blood of others; cigarettes have deadened the will of others; and immorality has hurled still others into the pit. They stumble into the rescue halls, "cities of refuge" in our cities. Happy are those who know how to save souls like these who have known better days and who have gone down into the valley of sin and sorrow. But it is worthwhile to save souls like these for

whom Jesus died. Let the rescue worker know (by personal experience, in truth) that he "shall save a soul from death," from a living death in which such a soul already finds itself and from eternal death as well. That is the reward of the winner of souls.

But it is not alone those who go down into the depths of gross sin, the "pick-me-ups" of life, that are to be won back. There are many who live in accord with the outward ethical standards of life who turn away from the knowledge of Jesus, who go after the strange gods of gold, of so-called knowledge, of materialistic monism, of "new thought," of Christian Science, of Russellism, of any new fad in science or philosophy or religion, of any new form of old wives' fables that lead men astray. These are, in reality, more difficult to win back to the truth as it is in Jesus, for they have the pride of knowledge and look with compassionate condescension on those who still worship Jesus as God and Saviour from sin.

The worker for souls has one more joy. He learns to see the good side of human nature. The bad side is there beyond a shadow of doubt. No man knows that better than the worker for the redemption of human souls. But this fact does not make him a pessimist or a cynic. He sees the angel in the stone. He learns the love that "shall cover a multitude of sins," "hides a host of sins" (Moffatt), that covers with a veil the sins of the poor soul who wandered away and is now brought back. See 1 Peter 4:8 for the same idea.

This is not the Jewish doctrine of merit in good works balancing evil ones, as Oesterley holds. Mayor also thinks that the man who rescues another saves his own soul. But this interpretation seems out of harmony with the teaching of Jesus and the whole trend of the gospel message. We do not need to go back to these "blind guides" of Pharisaism to find the key to this verse and that in 1 Peter 4:8, where we read that "love covers a multitude of sins." It is the love

that no longer sees the sins of the saved sinner. We see the true idea in Proverbs 10:12: "Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all transgressions." See also Psalm 85:2: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin." In Luke 7:47 Jesus speaks of the love of the converted woman as proof that she has been forgiven much.

James presents the joy of the winner of souls who throws the mantle of love over the sins of the repentant sinner, the joy of the Shepherd who has found the lost sheep out on the mountain and is returning with him in his arms, the joy of the Father who welcomes the prodigal boy home with the best robe and the fatted calf, the joy in the presence of the angels that one sinner has repented and turned unto God. That is heaven on earth. The preacher who has missed this joy of winning souls has missed the greatest reward in his ministry. If he has this, he can do without much else. He can stand many rebuffs, small salary, lack of help, if only there is this meat to eat that satisfied the soul of Jesus when he led one poor abandoned woman into the light and life of God.

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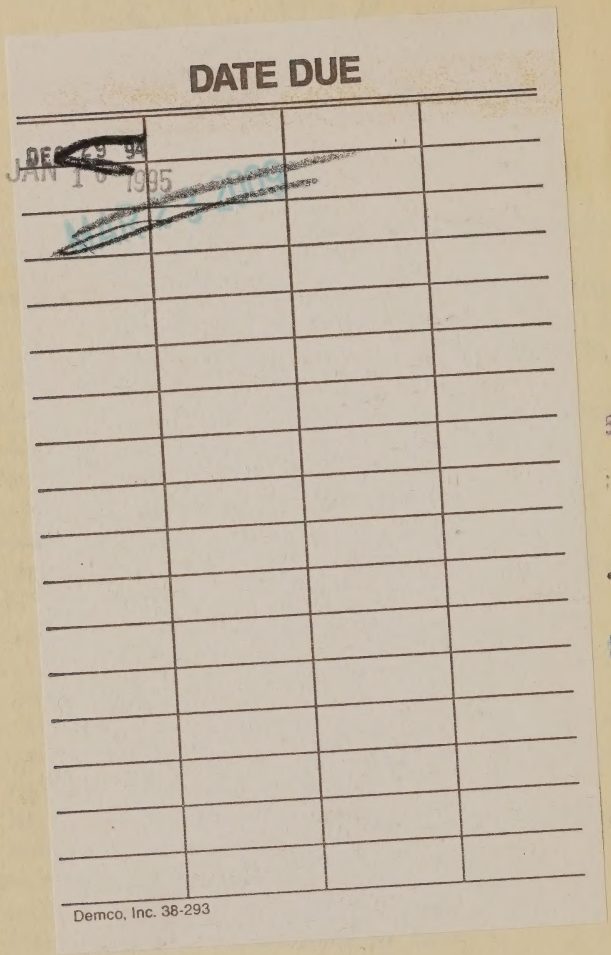
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